

# TREES + COMMUNITY

Trees as a Force for Social Good

Savannah Tree Foundation

Zoe Rinker



# SAVANNAH TREE FOUNDATION

*Our Trees - Our Future*

## **MISSION:**

Protect and grow Chatham County's urban forest through tree planting, community engagement, and advocacy.



# SAVANNAH TREE FOUNDATION

by the numbers...

5689

TOTAL TREES PLANTED

178

PLANTING SITES

54

UNIQUE SPECIES PLANTED

42

YEARS STRONG

# STF Programs to Date

*Sustainable. Local. Impactful.*



## Tree Planting

Over 5,600 trees planted  
10+ community planting events/year  
300+ volunteers engaged annually  
Planting sites across Chatham County



## Community Education

In-person and online events  
50k+ individuals reached each year  
25+ community events attended annually  
Serve all ages and backgrounds




## Advocacy

Promote the benefits of trees and strong tree ordinances  
Relationship with all 9 Chatham municipalities  
Media coverage of tree issues

# 2024: Game Changing Year

Big news from STF...

**CLIMATE-CHANGE**  
**\$1M grant to address Savannah's 'tree inequity,' offer non-traditional job path**  
John Deem Savannah Morning News  
Published 5:22 a.m. ET Jan. 8, 2024 | Updated 5:22 a.m. ET Jan. 8, 2024



**TREE PLANTING EXPANSION**  
SAVANNAH TREE FOUNDATION WILL INCLUDE MINORITY WORKERS

**Savannah Tree Foundation Awarded \$1 Million, 4-Year Grant To Address Equitable Tree Planting**  
By Savannah Tribune | on January 17, 2024

Local nonprofit organization Savannah Tree Foundation (STF) is pleased to announce it has been awarded a \$1 million, four-year grant to fund its Canopy Corps program, which addresses tree inequity and provides green job training opportunities in Chatham County. The grant was awarded by the Georgia Forestry Commission as part of its federally-funded Trees Across Georgia program under the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022.

The program will feature a year-long arboriculture apprenticeship for individuals seeking employment, especially those who are not traditionally represented in the workforce. Participants in the program will attend training and receive support necessary to work in the tree industry. The program will plant more than 1,600 new trees in historically underserved neighborhoods in Chatham County.

Three paid participants will be selected for the program. The nonprofit Step Up Savannah to create more than 1,600 new trees will be planted.

**NEWS: ENVIRONMENT**  
**Grants will grow tree canopy in Savannah, St. Marys**  
Savannah Tree Foundation plans to use \$1M grant to plant 1,600 trees in neighborhoods that need them most.

by Mary Landers  
marylanders@thecurrenttga.org  
January 8th, 2024  
Why you can trust The Current



**SAVANNAH NEWS**  
**City of Savannah roots for change after receiving \$1M grant from the Georgia Forestry Commission**  
by Tyler Carmona  
Posted: Jan 8, 2024 / 05:37 PM EST  
Updated: Jan 8, 2024 / 05:37 PM EST

# 2024: Game Changing Year

*New and Expanding Programs*



## Private Property Trees

85% of land in Chatham County is privately-owned

Counteract tree removals on private property

Promote diverse tree species

1,500+ 3-gallon trees per year

## Tree Nursery

Produce 2,000+ trees per year

Community education opportunities

Focus on native trees

Self-sustaining within 3 years

## Apprenticeship

Year-long, full-time, paid program

Target people not traditionally represented in the field

Curriculum includes hard and soft skills

Promote more green jobs in our region



How did we get here?



Trees can be...

SHADE





Trees can be...

**OXYGEN**

An aerial photograph of a dense forest. In the foreground, two large, mature pine trees with vibrant green needles and thick, grey trunks are prominent. The rest of the forest is a thick canopy of various green trees, creating a textured, layered appearance. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day, with some highlights on the pine needles.

Trees can be...

**HABITAT**



Trees can be...

**CULTURE**



Trees can be.....

**A FORCE FOR  
COMMUNITY CHANGE**



# Trees AND...

# Trees and Public Health

*Where can we plant trees to have the most positive impact on our community?*

- ▶ Urban Heat Islands
- ▶ Air Pollution
- ▶ Noise Pollution



# Trees and Community Engagement

*How can we use trees to encourage our community to engage in pressing environmental issues?*

- ▶ Trees and Youth
- ▶ Community Outreach
- ▶ Community Education



# Trees and Economic Development

*How can trees and the tree industry benefit our community as we experience unprecedented regional growth?*

- ▶ Trees and Green Job Training
- ▶ Trees as Infrastructure
- ▶ Trees and Construction





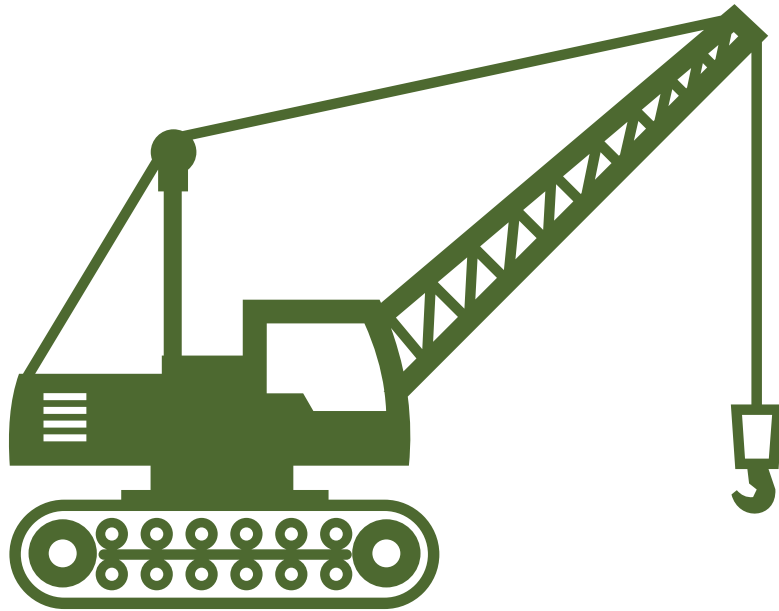


**Urban Forest  
Challenges**



**Social  
Challenges**

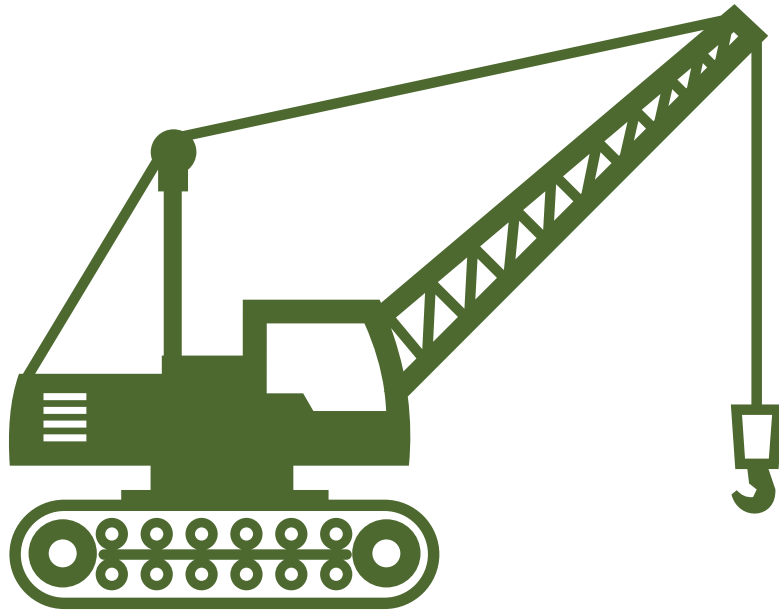
► **Continued regional growth and industrial expansion**



Chatham County's population is estimated to have grown by about 14% since 2010.

As of Q1 2023, the Savannah area has 104 million square feet of industrial space, with another 25 million under construction.

▶ **Continued regional growth and industrial expansion**



- ▶ Advocate for strong tree ordinance adoption in all municipalities across Chatham County
- ▶ Fund ordinance enforcement efforts to ensure developers are held accountable

## ▶ Aging tree canopy



The majority of downtown's tree canopy was planted in the late 1890s and early 1900s. Most urban live oaks will live to be about 150 years old, aging out around 2040.

Many existing trees in underserved areas are dead or dying, creating safety hazards.

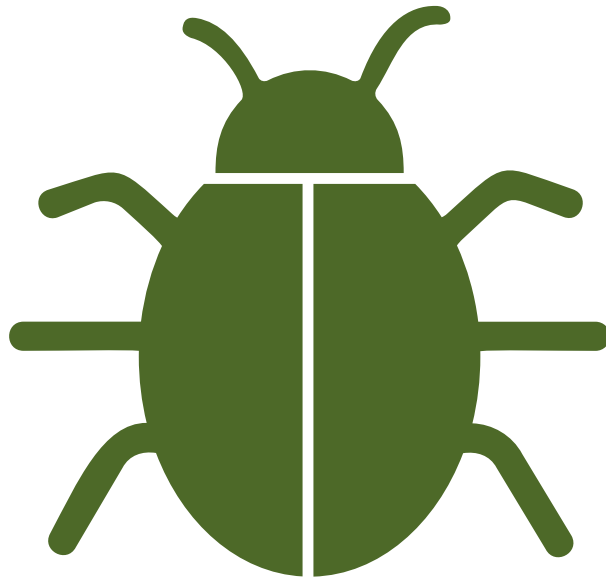


## ▶ Aging tree canopy



- ▶ Encourage City of Savannah and Chatham County to develop urban forest management plan.
- ▶ Reclaim lost tree lawns to start planting tomorrow's canopy.
- ▶ Advocate for a tree removal and replanting assistance program.

## ► Increased occurrences of pests and disease

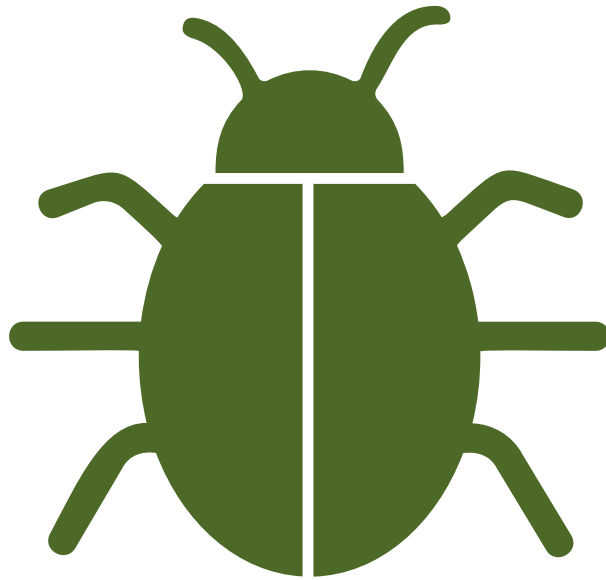


Increased globalization means that pests and disease travel quicker and further.

Savannah has already lost 1000+ sugarberry trees to an unknown disease

Asian Longhorned Beetle was recently found in SC

## ▶ Increased occurrences of pests and disease



- ▶ Educate community on what to look for when identifying potential pests and diseases
- ▶ Ensure we plant diverse tree species in our own plantings and encourage our municipal partners to do so as well
- ▶ Grow our own trees to control diversity and availability

## ► Impacts of changing climate



Area sea level is 11 inches higher than it was in 1950, leading to saltwater intrusion in our coastal forests

Savannah's dangerously hot days are expected to double between 2000 and 2030, with an estimated 81 days above 105° F each year by 2030



## ► Impacts of changing climate



- Plant trees to absorb stormwater, helping to mitigate flood impacts from increased sea levels.
- Plant trees to clean and cool the air, providing both short-term and long-term relief from effects of climate change.

# New STF Programs

## Trees for Private Property



- ▶ 85% of land in Chatham County is privately-owned
- ▶ Counteract tree removals on private property
- ▶ Promote diverse tree species
- ▶ 1,200 3-gallon trees given away last planting season
- ▶ Funding source: Corporate partners, grants

# New STF Programs

## Community Tree Nursery



- ▶ Opened April 2024
- ▶ Control the supply and quality of native trees for our programs
- ▶ Education and volunteer hub for STF
- ▶ Potential source of revenue
- ▶ Funding source: GoFundMe, Land and utility donation by Dulany Industries

# New STF Programs

## Chatham Canopy Corps



- ▶ Starts Summer 2024
- ▶ Green job training
- ▶ Year-long, full-time, paid program
- ▶ Target people not traditionally represented in the field
- ▶ Plant on private property where it's needed most
- ▶ Funding source: Inflation Reduction Act funds, passed through Georgia Forestry Commission

# Support Savannah's Trees!

- ▶ Let your elected officials know you care about trees!
- ▶ Sign up to volunteer with Savannah Tree Foundation.
- ▶ Donate at [savannahtree.org](http://savannahtree.org).
- ▶ Follow us on social media to learn more!

# Contact me

[zoe@savannahtree.org](mailto:zoe@savannahtree.org)

[SavannahTree.org](http://SavannahTree.org)

912.233.TREE