



NEWSLETTER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR
OKLAHOMA COMMUNITY FORESTRY COUNCIL

Spring 2025

100 Years of Oklahoma Forestry Services: A Century of Conservation, Protection, and Management

By: Keith Merckx,
OK Forestry Services

This year we recognized a significant milestone for Oklahoma Forestry Services (OFS) as the division celebrates its centennial anniversary. Established in 1925, the agency has dedicated a century to the conservation, protection, and management of Oklahoma's forests and natural resources. From its beginnings in sustaining forestland that was being rapidly depleted to timber production to becoming a leader in forest management, wildfire prevention and suppression, and sustainable land stewardship, OFS plays a critical role in the state's environmental landscape.

OFS traces its origins back to the early 20th century when Oklahomans recognized the need for organized efforts to combat the over harvesting of timber, destructive effects of wildfires, and soil erosion.

As settlers cleared the land, forests were at risk, and the need for professional management and restoration became clear. In 1925, the precursor to Oklahoma Forestry Services was formally created by the Oklahoma Legislature to address these challenges and promote forest health.

Over the years, OFS has expanded its role in wildfire prevention and suppression, provided education and technical assistance to landowners, and led efforts in tree planting, reforestation, and invasive species management. Today, the agency oversees a protection area of hundreds of thousands of acres of public forestlands and works closely with private landowners, municipalities, and local governments to promote healthy forests across the state.

In addition to its role in fire prevention and land management, OFS has become a hub for public education about the value of forests, the importance of sustainable practices, and the need to protect natural resources for future generations.

As Oklahoma Forestry Services celebrates 100 years of dedicated service, it looks toward the future with a continued commitment to sustainability, education, and the preservation of Oklahoma's rich natural heritage. It is with unbounded optimism that we look forward to the next century of resilient and vital forests.

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Tree Spotlight:

Chinkapin Oak

Generally considered to be a long-lived and low-maintenance shade tree, this Oklahoma native could be a great selectin for your next tree planting. Chinkapin Oak prefers full to part sun and well-drained soils. It can grow to about 50 feet tall with an equally or slightly larger canopy spread. It's fairly drought resistant and is known to be tolerant of alkaline soils.

With its large, glossy, dark yellow-green leaves it makes for a lovely shade tree in the summer months. While its blocky, irregular bark pattern gives visual interest through the winter. Its sweet acorns attract a variety of wildlife, supporting a diverse fauna. There are no major pests or diseases which would discourage a person from planting this tree, but Chinkapin can be susceptible to typical oak problems, such as: oak wilt, anthracnose, root rot, and several other typically minor issues.

Given that the planting space allows enough room for its dimensions at maturity, all these characteristics lend well to the urban or suburban environment. At one time Chinkapin Oak could be difficult to find in the nursery/tree farm industry, however in recent years it has made a greater appearance and is grown by several local tree farms. Not enough room for a Chinkapin Oak in your planting space? Maybe try the low-growing dwarf species (*Q. prinoides*).



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Grant Funding Opportunities

By: Elizabeth Bland-Corbishley

As winter fades, the season of re-growth is on our doorstep. Like trees getting ready to leaf out, Oklahoma Forestry Services (OFS) is preparing to open another round of applications for the Urban & Community Forestry Inflation Reduction Act Grant this spring. This grant is offered in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service through the Inflation Reduction Act with the goal of creating and supporting long-term programs to increase tree canopy and improve forest health. This funding is to mitigate issues like stormwater runoff, extreme heat, food insecurity, and provide workforce development as well as education outreach. In 2024, thirteen communities were awarded funds for projects on planting food forests, planning park trees, and downtown Mainstreet revitalization plantings. These funds are 100% passthrough, no match needed, and they must be used in disadvantaged areas based on the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool. Eligible entities may apply for \$5,000-\$50,000.

During this time of year, communities may be thinking about Arbor Day celebrations to become recognized as a Tree City USA community. OFS has another grant, the Urban & Community Forestry Assistance Grant to help boost urban forestry programs in communities such as these looking to improve their programs and celebrate trees. These funds may be used to update or create a tree ordinance, tree inventory, educational outreach, and on workforce development. This is a matching grant available in the fall which requires a 50% match from the entity applying. Eligible entities may apply for up to \$10,000.

Qualified entities for these grants include local government, non-profits, and educational institutions. For more information on these grant opportunities visit the OFS website at ag.ok.gov/divisions/forestry-services/.

We encourage you to apply once applications reopen!



Photo credit: B. Dickerson, Okla City Free Press



OKLAHOMA COMMUNITY
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Upcoming Events

Pruning Workshop

Instructor: Lindsey Purcell

June 17 & 18 (6 ISA CEUs per day*)

Wes Watkins Center, Stillwater

Wood Decay Workshop

Instructors: Dr. Chris Luley and Frank Rinn

September 29 & 30 (13 ISA CEUs*)

Tulsa Garden Center, Tulsa

OCFC Annual Conference

Guest Speaker: Dr. Ed Gilman

October 28 (6 ISA CEUs*)

The Lookout, Edmond

*ISA CEUs are estimates and contingent upon ISA approval

www.okcfc.org

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DATES TO REMEMBER

Arbor Week

March 24 - 29, 2025