

# Matching Underused Native Trees with Underserved Communities - The Chesapeake Bay Trust's Nursery Project

In response to Maryland's Tree Solutions Now Act of 2021, which established the 5 Million Trees for Maryland Initiative, the Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT) was tasked with planting 500,000 native trees in underserved areas by 2031. This ambitious goal recognizes the vital role of trees in nature-based solutions, particularly in addressing environmental disparities in historically marginalized, low-income, and high-unemployment areas.

Recognizing that current nursery supply may not be sufficient to meet the increased demand, CBT held a listening session with local nursery producers and the University of Maryland Extension. The goal was to identify native tree species desired for urban greening projects that are currently underrepresented in Maryland's nursery trade. Through these discussions, CBT identified 47 native species that planting organizations preferred but found to be either underproduced or unavailable. This scarcity was largely due to the species' slower growth rates and higher production costs, which often make them less attractive in the current nursery market.



**The Nursery Project RFI/RFP**

- Part I: Request for Information:**
  - We wanted to know the trees species that were currently available at local nurseries and their prices so that potential applicants could develop budgets and plans for direct procurement.
  - Growers were asked to complete an inventory of the currently available tree species and prices for Fall 2023-Spring 2024
- Part II: Request for Proposals**
  - We wanted to diversify the native tree species being planted in our urban tree projects.
  - We sought to grow 7,000 native trees within a list of 47 species to be available for delivery and/or pickup in fall 2026 and spring 2027.

Photo credit: EcoTone Nursery

Based on these findings, CBT issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to produce 7,000 native trees from the identified list over a three-year period. Seven nurseries responded, and four were selected to cultivate these underutilized species. To date, these nurseries have successfully grown 20,030 trees, with 9,180 allocated to support CBT's Underserved Greening Initiative.

CBT is now developing a matching program to connect these trees with projects in local communities, focusing on aligning trees with community goals, location, aesthetics, and wildlife benefits. This initiative demonstrates how CBT integrates scientific insights and strong community partnerships to fulfill Maryland's legislative goals, ultimately enhancing environmental resilience and equity across the state.

**Interested in learning more? See a full presentation on this project using this QR Code!**

