

Citizen Forester Program

Information Pack



What is the Citizen Forester Program?

The Citizen Forester Program is a partnership between the community and the City of Melbourne to support and enhance Melbourne's urban forest. Community volunteers are trained and empowered to grow the urban forest and improve urban ecology by carrying out essential advocacy, monitoring and research tasks.

Background

Since 2011, Council has worked closely with the community to develop the Urban Forest Strategy and the subsequent Urban Forest Precinct Plans for each of the city's 10 precincts. This collaborative process has been very successful and fostered high levels of interest and participation from the community. It has also highlighted a strong demand from the community for ongoing participation in the implementation of the Urban Forest Strategy.

In response to this demand, the Citizen Forester Program has been established to facilitate ongoing and meaningful partnership with the community.

Citizen science is used widely across the globe in the context of urban forestry, particularly in North America. For example, the Citizen Forester Program operated by Casey Trees in Washington DC was established in 2002 to 'restore, protect and enhance the tree canopy in the nation's capital'. Today, they represent a group of over 1400 dedicated volunteers who have planted over 17,500 trees and continue to advocate for the urban forest in Washington DC. Similarly, New York City called for Citizen Tree Stewards to volunteer to help maintain and protect

their urban forest. Stewards can choose to support the trees through a range of activities, including watering, weeding and tree protection measures.

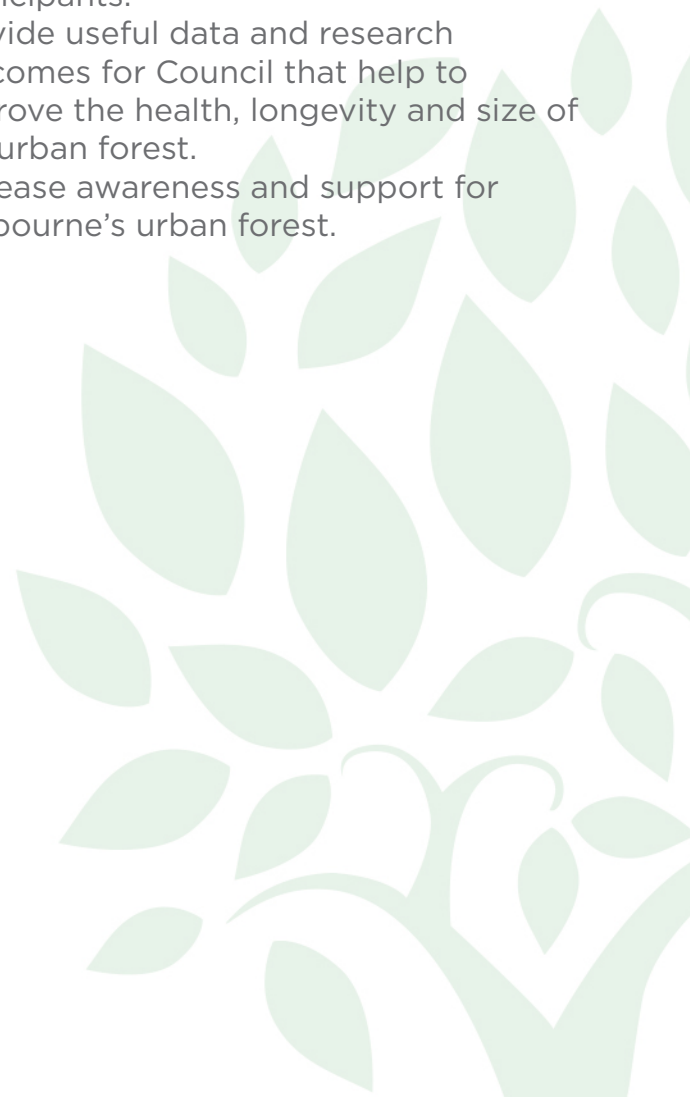
Citizen Forester Program objective

The Citizen Forester Program is a partnership between Council and the community to create resilient, healthy and diverse urban landscapes for the future. Catering for different levels of ability and interest, the program includes a variety of activities that allow volunteers to participate in a meaningful, fun and rewarding way.

Guiding Principles

The Citizen Forester Program aims to:

- Be fun, educational and rewarding for participants.
- Provide useful data and research outcomes for Council that help to improve the health, longevity and size of the urban forest.
- Increase awareness and support for Melbourne's urban forest.



Program Details

The Citizen Forester Program is structured as a core program with a series of modules that can be activated at various times depending on available resources, levels of interest or need for data. All Citizen Foresters are part of the core program and have the option to participate in the modules as it suits their level of interest or commitment level. There is no minimum commitment level for Citizen Foresters.

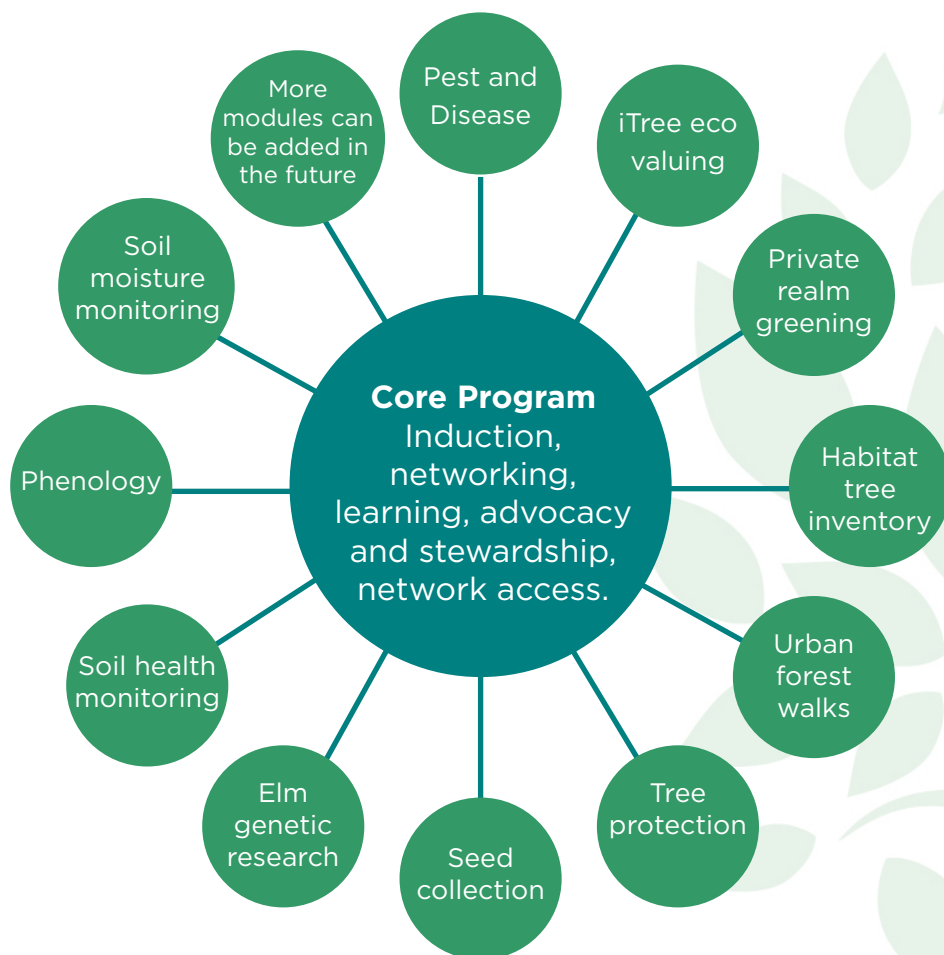
The core program includes:

- Information session for volunteers
- Networking and learning events, such as guest lectures
- Basic training so that Citizen Foresters can alert the Urban Forest and Ecology team of any urban forest issues they come across in their day-to-day lives

Regardless of your level of involvement in the additional modules, all citizen foresters are expected to:

- Meet the minimum entrance requirements (completed application, police check and working with children check)
- Act as an urban forest steward – using your enhanced understanding of the urban forest to alert CoM staff to any tree health issues or hazards
- As representatives of the City of Melbourne, conduct themselves in line with our values and behavioural standards

Citizen Foresters can withdraw from the Program at any time and there is no minimum term for participation. Council reserves the right to exclude any person from the program if they breach the specified conditions.



Program Communication

A Citizen Forester Program webpage is under construction and will be integrated into the Participate Melbourne website, providing a touch point for volunteers. This digital platform will serve three key functions:

- Provide information about the program for people who might be interested in participating, including updates on current and past projects.
- Be a place where citizen foresters can access news, information about upcoming activities and interact with each other and council staff. For example, it might include discussion forums where volunteers can share stories from the activities they have taken part in.
- Allow for spatial data entry (from volunteers) and data management (for Council staff), through integration with ArcGIS online.

Communication between Council staff and volunteers will be face to face or digital, unless otherwise requested by volunteers, and will include emails, newsletters, social media updates (Twitter, Facebook and Instagram), as well as direct engagement events.

Next steps for volunteers

To become a Citizen Forester, you must:

1. Provide your details to City of Melbourne HR team and complete the online sign-up process through the Page Up system
2. Complete your Police Check and Working With Children check, in line with City of Melbourne volunteer protocol
3. Accept the volunteer code of conduct through Page Up
4. Visit the Citizen Forester Program website to learn more about upcoming activities

Contact

If you have any questions about this information or would like to discuss the Citizen Forester Program in more detail, please contact the Urban Forest and Ecology Team on the details below.

Forest and Ecology Team

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