



Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

A new oak savannah has been planted in Peoria County

Dressed in rainboots and gloves, carrying shovels and trowels, twenty six people arrived at Sommer Farm on April 9 to plant 25 oak trees to create an oak tree savanna. The dedicated and efficient group consisted of Master Gardeners, 4-H families, Peoria Park District staff, Peoria County SWCD board members and Extension staff.

They planted a total of 25 oak trees, in a grouping called a savanna, which will bring new life to oak-hickory forests currently under threat in Illinois. At Sommer Farm, a site was chosen where in the future, outdoor weddings, gatherings and other events will be able to enjoy the sanctuary of the trees.

“Oak savannas are being overtaken by invasive species, as well as more shade-tolerant trees, such as maples,” says Curt Sinclair, University of Illinois Extension 4-H specialist. “Illinois 4-H is primed to take action to increase the number of oak trees in the state. The natural world is talking to us, and Illinois 4-H is primed to listen, learn, and act.”

This oak savanna was made possible by the 4-H Green Communities Tree Program which focuses on tackling global issues at a local level. University of Illinois Extension partnered with the Association of Illinois Soil & Water Conservation Districts (AISWCD) to bring this project to life. Peoria County was just one of the 31 counties participating in this statewide program, which throughout spring of 2022 will plant a total of 775 trees across the state.

4-H alumni and parent, Andrew Monkemeyer shared why he participated and why he thought it was important to be involved. "Being taught as a 4-H member growing up, we were shown how important it is to serve our community. I want to pass these values to my children as well. My daughter Mabel and I had a wonderful time being able to get outside on a beautiful Saturday morning and serve Peoria County through planting trees. Getting to know other 4-H members and families as well made it a fantastic experience for my family!"

This was a wonderful community collaboration that resulted in beautiful oak savanna that will benefit future generations for many years to come.



Photo by Judy Schmidt Unsplash

4-H Federation member, Annemarie Litwiler assisting with planting trees for the oak savanna at Sommer Farm.

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