



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

'Growing' Arbor Day

Senator Patty Ritchie

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Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

For most communities across the county, the fourth Sunday of April is recognized as Arbor Day. It is a day when family, friends and neighbors come together to plant trees and more importantly, raise awareness of the role trees play in our environment. Locally, Arbor Day means even more. The man recognized for starting Arbor Day traditions, Julius Sterling Morton, was born in the Jefferson County Town of Adams on April 22, 1832.

While January's snow and cold certainly isn't tree planting weather, now is the time to encourage your community—including local leaders, schools and neighbors—to get involved with planning an Arbor Day celebration.

The New York State Urban Forestry Council recently announced there is funding available for small communities—with populations of less than 65,000—to have an Arbor Day event and begin a community forestry program. The funding is provided by the USDA Forest Service and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Urban Forestry Program. Applications for funding can be found [here](#) or by calling (585) 624-3385. The deadline to apply is February 28th.

Grants of up to \$1,000 will be awarded to communities or non-profits that work in partnership with municipalities. With grant funds, communities are encouraged to start a shade tree committee, begin a forestry program, and promote an Arbor Day celebration. Eligible expenses are limited to trees, mulch, soil, stakes, tree-watering devices and printing of promotional materials. Often, municipalities will include schools to help create projects that teach students about the importance of protecting the environment.

Trees play a key role in safeguarding our planet—they help remove harmful chemicals from soil, provide habitats for animals and more. For great tips on how you can make a difference this Arbor Day by planting a tree, visit www.arborday.org. If you are interested in spearheading an Arbor Day event, or beginning a community forestry program, I encourage you to apply for funding through the New York State Urban Forestry Council. Again, applications need to be received by February 28th.