

# Montana School ReLeaf Program

## Overview & Guidelines



*The Montana School ReLeaf Project has three primary goals: to increase awareness of urban forestry in Montana schools; support sustainable urban "greenscapes" on school grounds; and to teach students to be good stewards of the land.*

The Montana ReLeaf project was developed in 2013 and supported by a team of individuals from the Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC), US Forest Service, Montana Office of Public Instruction, and Montana Urban & Community Forestry Association. The program is administered by the MT DNRC Urban and Community Forestry Program.

Perks of becoming a ReLeaf School:

- ✓ Access to individuals in natural resources professions
- ✓ Receive recognition materials and an educational resource kit
- ✓ Become eligible for mini grants to use for purchase of educational materials, a learning activity, or a tree planting
- ✓ Earn a spot on the DNRC urban forestry webpage featuring your school's success
- ✓ Give children an early appreciation of trees and their role in the environment
- ✓ Establish partnerships and support from local government, groups, clubs, and businesses

A school achieves status by meeting 3 standards centered on discovering the many benefits of trees:

1. Educational activity to raise awareness about trees
2. Adopt a basic tree plan for school grounds
3. Celebrate Arbor Day

### *Did you know?*

*Children who play outside are more physically active, more creative in their play, less aggressive and show better concentration. (Burdette and Whitaker. 2005; Ginsbura et al.. 2007)*

# How to meet the standards



*It's as simple as one, two, tree!*

Once you complete these steps, you are ReLeaf school! Download the application/sign up form from the DNRC website. The application period covers actions from a typical school year (fall through spring). After submittal and approval, you will receive informational materials regarding your ReLeaf status and be eligible for mini-grants.

## 1. Educational activity to raise awareness about trees

There are many great resources and existing curriculum available to complete this standard.

*"Let Nature be your teacher." – William Wordsworth*

Your suggested first stop - contact your [DNRC regional urban forester](#). They can assist by providing information, supplies, materials, connect you to natural resource professionals, even come out to your school to do a classroom presentation or exercise.

A list of available curriculum is offered on our [website](#). We recommend Project Learning Tree, a program currently offered by Montana State University's Extension Office. <http://www.msuextension.org/forestry/mtplt.htm>.

## 2. Have a basic tree plan for school grounds

Your tree plan can take on many forms, but generally illustrates the current status/location of trees on the school grounds. One way to do this is by mapping or inventorying the trees. Example maps are available on the DNRC [ReLeaf page](#). If you need assistance on making a tree inventory, contact your city/town public works/main office, local tree board, or your regional urban forester.

Another option is to provide a general summary along with some goals for improving your school's grounds (i.e. through planting trees), and a timeline for making sure the yearly standards are met. A sample school plan is shown on the website.

## 3. Celebrate Arbor Day

Montana's Arbor Day is on the last Friday of April.

You are encouraged to contact your city/town, as they may be holding an Arbor Day Celebration and your class can participate with this event. Or you may want to hold your own small celebration at your school, in which a regional urban forester or similar professional can help.

There are many different ways to celebrate Arbor Day. Some ideas are available on the Arbor Day Foundation's website, at <http://arborday.org/arborday/celebrate.cfm>.