

Topsfield: Grant helps town branch out as tree-friendly town

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Correspondent

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TOPSFIELD — With the vision of a tree-conscious couple and help from a government grant, Topsfield has made strides toward protecting some of its oldest residents.

The Topsfield Tree Planning Committee received a \$5,000 urban forestry grant from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, as well as a \$1,095 match grant from the town. The committee hopes to use that money to join neighbors Boxford and Danvers as a Tree City USA.

"Having Tree City USA status basically says that your town has a good tree management plan and takes pride in (its) trees," said Topsfield Tree Warden David Bond.

According to TTPC member Dan Peabody, Topsfield qualified for the urban forestry grant after National Grid cut down several trees that were too close to the power lines in 2006. Peabody and his wife, Grace, applied for the grant, citing they would use the money to fund the programs needed to qualify as a Tree City USA.

According to the Arbor Day Foundation, the town must have an active tree board or department, a tree care ordinance, a forestry budget of at least \$2 per capita, and hold an annual Arbor Day observance or proclamation.

Peabody said the TTPC hopes to draft new tree ordinances by December, complete a tree inventory and do several Arbor Day programs with the town's schools like distributing seedlings to fourth-graders and sponsoring a poster contest.

Topsfield was a Tree City USA in the past, but Peabody said after former tree warden John Nutter died, the TTPC became inactive and the distinction has not been applied for since.

"It's something we hope we can get back to show the town we are taking care of our trees," Peabody said.

The Peabodys, being Topsfield residents and owners of Eastgate Garden Design, were asked to join the TTPC, ending years of inactivity. They hope three members will join them so the six-person committee can run at full capacity.