

STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM GUIDE

2026



County of Perth
1 Huron Street, Stratford, ON, N5A 5S4
www.perthcounty.ca/stewardship



Table of Contents

About the Program, Ecological Resilience 03

Key Dates 04

Stewardship Streams 05

The Application Process 06

The Planting Plan 07

Budgets and Expenses 08

Application Tips 09

Perth County Plant Guide 10

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Launched in 2024, the Perth County Stewardship Program aims to provide resources and financial assistance to landowners and community groups completing meaningful stewardship projects in Perth County. Planting trees and monitoring forest health is essential to maintain the ecological resilience of our land and communities, helping to preserve the quality of agricultural assets for future generations.



Perth County is committed to cultivating a greener future through Stewardship Grants in 2026.

ECOLOGICAL RESILIENCE

As of 2025, Perth County had only 9% tree cover, with some wards reporting levels as low as 4%. Environment and Climate Change Canada recommends a minimum forest cover of 30% to support less than half the potential species richness and marginally healthy aquatic systems in a region. Existing woodlands are experiencing significant decline in health due to compounding stressors such as invasive species, habitat fragmentation, and ongoing land use change.

As a key contributor to Ontario’s agricultural economy—ranking third in farm cash receipts—Perth County plays a vital role in the province’s agri-food sector. In this context, it is increasingly critical to invest in stewardship efforts across rural landscapes and urban–rural interfaces to enhance the resilience of natural systems, restore soil health, improve air quality, and sustain essential ecological services.

DID YOU KNOW?

Stewardship projects include: windbreaks, riparian buffer zones, living snow fences, marginal land restoration, forest rehabilitation, block plantings, and more.

KEY DATES

SPRING PROJECTS:

October 1, 2025 - January 30, 2026:

Spring Application Intake Open

February 2026:

Stewardship Grants Awarded

November 25, 2026:

Final Reports Due

FALL PROJECTS:

June 1, 2026 - September 1, 2026:

Fall Application Intake Open

October 2026:

Stewardship Grants Awarded

November 25, 2026:

Final Reports Due

All project locations must be within the municipal boundaries of Perth South, West Perth, North Perth, or Perth East.



STEWARDSHIP STREAMS



LANDOWNER STREAM

The landowner stream supports private property owners planting 50 or more trees for windbreaks, block plantings, or buffers. Applicants may apply for 60% of project costs, to a maximum of \$4,000.00 (before HST). This funding can be 'stacked' with other grants up to 100%.

A planting plan approved or developed by a Conservation Authority or experienced tree planting contractor must be submitted.



WOODLAND STREAM

The woodland stream supports rural woodland and woodlot landowners completing a Forest Management Plan by a Registered Professional Forester. Eligible applicants may apply for a grant to cover project costs to a maximum of \$1,000.00. The applicant must be the owner of the woodlot property.



COMMUNITY STREAM

The community stream supports not-for-profit community groups, Conservation Authorities or local municipalities in accomplishing restoration projects on public lands or through tree distribution programs. Applicants may apply for 100% of project cost to a maximum of \$5,000.00 (before-HST).

There is no requirement for a community group's incorporation but it must be in good standing and have been in operation for more than two years at the time of application.



LIVING SNOW FENCES

The living snow fence stream supports rural landowners planting trees approximately 35 meters from the edge of the roadway, in a windbreak. Eligible applicants may apply for 100% of project costs to a maximum of \$10,000.00 (before-HST). The applicant must work with the County or local Municipality to complete the Planting Plan in a way that reduces snow drifting, improves visibility, and improves the safety of road users in winter months.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS



Applicant contacts an experienced tree planting professional or Conservation Authority to create a planting plan and secure the necessary approvals for setbacks from infrastructure.

Submit an application to Perth County's Stewardship Program using the online form or the printable forms. Quotes, approvals, and the planting plan are required.

Applications are reviewed by the Perth County Agricultural Working Group and scored based on evaluation criteria. Successful applicants are notified by e-mail.

Successful applicants undertake the project work. The applicant submits a final report through Perth County's website or printable forms. This final report includes receipts, before/after photos. Grant funds are sent upon receipt of the final report.

SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

Applications must be submitted before the specified closing date. Applications received after the closing date and time or incomplete applications will not be considered for that application intake, but may be deferred to the next intake.

Application forms may be submitted:

- Online through the Perth County Stewardship Plan webpage (preferred); or
- Delivered hard copies to the County of Perth (1 Huron St., Stratford, N5A 5S4).



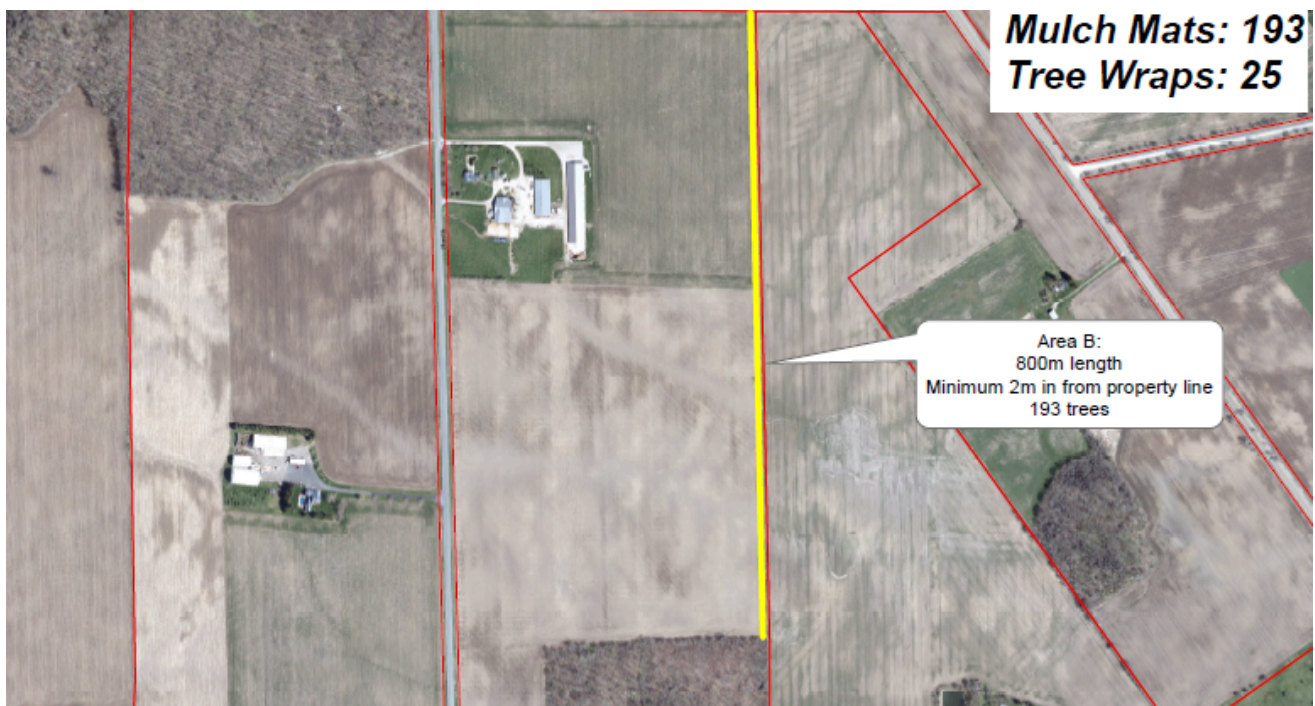
Visit www.perthcounty.ca/stewardship to access application forms and supporting resources. Questions about the application process can be directed to the Resiliency and Stewardship Coordinator at the County of Perth.

THE PLANTING PLAN

Planting plans created by Conservation Authorities and reputable landscaping businesses are usually sufficient. If not using one of these services, please note the necessary items to include:

- Methods of site preparation, long-term tree maintenance, and tree protection.
- Tree and shrub species must be native to Southwestern Ontario and well-suited to the planting location.
- Livestock must be fenced away from the planting site.
- Landscaping projects or planting for tree/nut/fruit farming are not eligible.
- A Tree Maintenance Agreement (15 years) signed by the property owner is required.
- Proof of permission from the Municipality or County if planting is taking place near a road allowance or municipal drain to ensure no liability concerns to roads or infrastructure. Adequate setbacks must be adhered to.
- An aerial image of the site (can be a screen capture from Perth County GIS, Conservation Authority GIS, or Google Maps). Include detailed demarcations of where the trees or shrubs will be planted if not included in the planting plan.

Example of a planting plan:





PROJECT BUDGET & EXPENSES

A detailed project budget must include a breakdown of all eligible expenditures, the amount of funding requested from the Perth County Stewardship Program and other financial assistance programs.

The project budget should include quotes, invoices, and draft tree order forms. The application should provide as much detail as possible for in-kind services such as site preparation, tree planting and maintenance activities.

If there are significant changes to the planting plan between the time of approval and when the planting is to occur, please inform the County Resiliency and Stewardship Coordinator so the project plan can be adjusted.

Eligible expenses include: labour, tree protection products, site preparation, native trees and shrubs, licenced contractor services of a Registered Professional Forester for a Forest Management Plan. Ineligible expenses include HST and permit costs. Eligible expenses are approved by the evaluation committee on a case-by-case basis.

APPLICATION TIPS



Species Diversity

Projects with higher species diversity improve Perth County's resiliency to disturbances (e.g. Emerald Ash Borer), provide higher quality habitat, and improve the land's ability to mitigate extreme weather events.

All species used in the planting plan must be native to Southwestern Ontario; the only exception is Norway Spruce (*Picea abies*). Landscaping plants, such as Emerald Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis* 'Smaragd') are not considered native.

Multi-Property Projects

Habitat fragmentation, or the absence of linking corridors between ecosystems, is a key threat to ecosystem resilience, contributing to the decline of biological diversity. Projects that link forests and wetlands are valuable to our landscape.

Larger projects that cross multiple properties can be submitted under one application, as long as all landowners agree to support the project. For example: a windbreak following a creek flowing across multiple farm fields, linking two forested areas.

Multi-Benefit Projects

Planting trees is important to the virility of farmlands and the resilience of our communities. Projects with multiple benefits to the landscape, including erosion control, retirement of fragile lands, surface water thermal regulation, habitat corridors, and habitat links, are scored higher.

Some projects may grow to a size or tree density that would fall within the purview of the Forest Conservation By-law. In these cases, the applicant would be notified in advance of submitting the application, for added awareness.

PERTH COUNTY PLANT GUIDE

CONIFEROUS	Height	Drainage	Light	Soil Type
White Cedar	15 m			sand/loam/clay
White Pine	35 m			sand/loam/silt
Norway Spruce*	30 m			sand/loam/clay
White Spruce	25 m			sand/loam/clay
Blue Spruce	15 m			sand/loam/silt
Tamarack	15 m			organic/loam
Hemlock	25 m			sand/loam

DECIDUOUS

Silver, Red, Maple	25 m			sand/loam/clay
Sugar Maple	30 m			sand/loam/clay
Bur, Red, White Oak	30 m			sand/loam/clay
Black Walnut	30 m			loam/clay
White Birch	15 m			sand/loam/clay
Sycamore	30 m			sand/loam/clay
Tulip Tree	30 m			sand/loam/clay
Basswood	30 m			sand/loam/clay
Hickory	25 m			sand/loam
Black Cherry	22 m			loam/clay
Black Willow	12 m			sand/loam/clay

SHRUB

Red Osier Dogwood	3 m			sand/loam/clay
Staghorn Sumac	4.5 m			sand/loam/clay
Highbush Cranberry	4.5 m			sand/loam/clay
Nannyberry Viburnum	4.5 m			sand/loam/clay
Serviceberry	6 m			sand/loam/clay
Spicebush	4 m			sand/loam
Elderberry	1.5 m			sand/loam/clay
Ninebark	6 m			sand/loam/clay

These are general recommendations only. For site-specific recommendations, contact your local Conservation Authority or landscape expert.

*Not native, but widely accepted as appropriate for Perth County.

Well drained
 Spring pooling
 Well to poorly drained
 Full shade
 Partial sun
 Full sun

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

FOR TREE PLANTING INFORMATION OR SERVICE:

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority

Ian Jean, Forestry Specialist

(519) 235-2610 x 238

ijean@abca.ca

www.abca.ca

Maitland Valley Conservation Authority

Karlene Zurbrigg, Watershed Forester

(519) 335-3557 x 250

kzurbrigg@mvca.on.ca

www.mvca.on.ca

Grand River Conservation Authority

Myles Henderson, Forestry Specialist

(519) 621-2763 x 2259

trees@grandriver.ca

www.grandriver.ca

Upper Thames River Conservation Authority

Rob Davies, Forestry & Restoration Supervisor

(519) 451-2800 x 243

daviesr@thamesriver.on.ca

www.thamesriver.on.ca

Perth County Forestry By-law

Enforcement Officer

Marvin Smith

(519) 291-2236

www.perthcounty.ca

Questions? Contact Us

Perth County Stewardship Program

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