

This training resource is designed to help conservation district directors and employees stay informed of key points discussed in recent web-based training. The document should be listed on the district's meeting agenda for discussion and review.

Basic Program Information

- The program is available statewide; each individual conservation district board must take action to participate – participation is not automatic.
- It is a community resiliency program that targets conservation for urban and suburban dwellers focusing on wildlife habitat and native plants. But it is **not** a free pass to quit mowing and/or managing a yard. Yard x Yard is about intentionality – managing a yard to provide habitat and native plants while still looking nice and fitting into the landscape design and community.
- Every yard is different! There is no requirement for the number of plants or yard size.
- Public education is an important part of Yard x Yard; it is a way to bridge a connection between monoculture landscapes and diverse ones. The resources provided to participants, including the yard sign, postcards, and seeds, help to inform others, manage expectations for what the area may look like, and explain the change some neighbors may notice.
- The program is expanding! Grounds x Grounds, Yard x Yard's sister program, focuses on public spaces such as businesses, schools, churches, and parks.
- Sponsors of the program are the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD), Friends of Blue Thumb, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, Oklahoma County CD, and Tulsa County CD.

Eligibility

- For a district to participate in the program, you must:
 - Be current on payment of OACD Dues
 - Be a member of Friends of Blue Thumb
 - Take action at a regular board meeting to participate in the program.
- For an individual to participate in the district's local program, they must:
 - Complete and submit an application
 - Utilize and have implemented at least 5 approved Yard x Yard practices
 - Work with district staff to schedule and complete an on-site visit
 - Sign a photo release form
 - Display their Yard x Yard sign and engage with their community about the program

How It Works

- A Yard x Yard program contact will attend your district board meeting to discuss the program. If the district board approves participation, the program contact will assist with your district's first few site visits – you won't be alone!
- Jack and/or Marcus will receive and review applications, then reach out to the district with the next steps.
- The district will verify the information provided on the application and complete a certification review via an on-site visit with the applicant. The certification review and photos should be sent back to Marcus. While completing an on-site visit, districts should:
 - Request a tour of the applicant's yard

- Take lots of pictures (try not to capture any personally identifying information though).
- Provide encouragement to the homeowner.
- Watch out for red flags that may include aggressive overgrowth, references to their yard being left “wild” and/or their mentioning “issues with code office and unhappy neighbors.”
- Following the site visit and certification approval, the district will provide a yard sign, postcards, seeds, and other outreach materials to the homeowner(s).
 - The district should get a photo of homeowner(s) with their Yard x Yard sign!
 - Signs can be replaced if damaged or stolen – the homeowner just needs to let the district know.

Native Plant Species

- Some common native plant species that district staff may encounter on a site visit or could recommend to homeowners for planting, include:

○ Blanket Flower	○ Switch Grass
○ Aromatic Aster	○ Little Bluestem
○ Purple Coneflower	○ Indian Grass
○ Black Eyed Susan	○ Blue Grama Grass
○ Butterfly Weed	○ Redbud
○ Prairie Coneflower	○ Button Bush
○ Inland Sea Oats	○ Hackberry
○ Foxglove	○ Post Oak
- **Be sure to recommend native cultivars of plants!*

Additional Resources

- Program Contacts:
 - Cheryl Cheadle, OCC, Blue Thumb Volunteer Coordinator
 - Jack Titchener, OCC, Tulsa Urban Soil Conservationist
 - Marcus Long, OCC, Oklahoma City Urban Soil Conservationist
 - Amanda Fitzgerald, OACD Youth Contest Coordinator
- Yard x Yard Program page on the OACD website:
<https://www.okconservation.org/yard-by-yard-gounds-by-grounds>
- Training Resources section of the OCC website
- District Employees Team on Teams