

Global warming brings southern Ohio trees to northern areas

October 15 2012, by Bob Downing

For the first time, two tree species more commonly found in warmer southern Ohio are being planted in a northern county's park.

Citing [global warming](#), Virginia pine and river birch [trees](#) are going into the Tallmadge Meadows Area of the Munroe Falls Metro Park, along with native Ohio species, said Michael Johnson, chief of natural resources for Metro Parks.

A total of 89 Virginia pine and 25 river birches are being planted off Ohio state Route 91, east of Cuyahoga Falls and southwest of Kent, in the park district's biggest tree planting in decades, Johnson said.

The Virginia pine and the river birch are expected to be able to survive in Northeast Ohio and likely will move northward in the future because of climate change so it just makes sense to plant them locally now, he said.

A reason to plant them now is those trees are likely to do well and some [native plant species](#) that would ordinarily be planted might not do as well in the future, he said.

The plantings are considered "assisted migration" since the park district is giving a helping hand to species that are likely to move here in the future anyway.

"The fact is that global warming is happening," he said. "It is real. And

we can't stop it. The question is how can we help the ecosystem adapt. How do we adapt to climate change?"

The plantings represent "a first step," Johnson said. "It's a little jump, not a big jump. But it's something we feel that we need to do. We want to assist in that process."

The park district, he said, is starting to rethink what it calls [native plants](#). The list here is being expanded to include plants more commonly found now in central and southern Ohio, he said.

These plants already are moving to the north due to [climate change](#) and changes in [growing seasons](#). Birds and other animals are also adapting.

The planting of nearly 1,200 trees at Tallmadge Meadows started Oct. 9 and continue this week. The trees range in size from 1.5 feet to 11 feet with roots balled and covered in burlap.

Twelve other species being planted include white pine, cedar, sugar maple, tulip tree, beech, sassafras, black willow, butternut hickory, black gum and three species of oak.

Seeds of oak, hickory, beech and walnuts collected in the park district are also being planted.

The park district's past policy has been to plant only native species found in Northeast Ohio and that would have excluded both Virginia pine and river birch. But both [species](#) can be found growing in the surrounding county, Johnson said.

The park district has invested about \$7,000 in the new trees plus about \$3,000 on the prairie tract. Park staffers are providing the manpower.

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