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DeLand to give away 2,000 trees April 17



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By Barb Shepherd
 BEACON STAFF WRITER

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The City of DeLand and the DeLand Breakfast Rotary Club are planning for the popular annual DeLand Tree Giveaway Saturday, April 17, and hope to have a less-stressful event than last year.

In 2009, city officials tried some changes to the giveaway that resulted in long lines, disappointed residents and frustrated volunteers. For 2010, the giveaway will go back to its old format.



PHOTO COURTESY CITY OF DELAND
 Come and get 'em — Earnest Robinson helps load trees at the 2009 DeLand Tree Giveaway.

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"We're doing it a lot simpler, and it's going to be a lot faster," Breakfast Rotary tree-nursery volunteer Jerry Frierson said.

DeLand residents need only show up between 8 a.m. and 11 a.m. Saturday at the South Amelia Avenue gate to the Public Works Complex.

The complex is situated between Amelia and Garfield avenues just north of New Hampshire Avenue, and is home to the city tree nursery, a

partnership of city government and the Breakfast Rotary.

At the Amelia Avenue entrance, residents will be asked to show identification to prove city residency, and to fill out a simple form indicating which kinds of trees they would like. The forms can also be downloaded from the DeLand Web site at www.deland.org, and filled out in advance.

Each resident will be given up to three trees, and may also pick up three trees for another city resident, with a written request from the person and proof of that person's residency. No more than six trees will be loaded into any vehicle.

Available are about 2,000 baldcypress, blue beech, American elm, winged elm, live oak, loquat, magnolia, pine, Chickasaw plum, flatwoods plum, redbud, red maple, river birch, Southern red cedar and sweet gum trees. They are 1 or 2 years old and between 3 and 4 feet tall.



Those who come to get free trees should expect to have to wait in line, and should understand the city will run out of some varieties, city officials said.

After loading, participants will exit the complex onto South Garfield

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Avenue.
 Last year, two new ideas created "a hostile environment" at the giveaway, DeLand Public Services Director Keith Riger noted.

Residents were allowed to reserve certain types of trees, and were upset when the varieties they had reserved were not available.

Also, the giveaway was opened up to nonresidents of DeLand last year.

This year, no reservations will be taken, and identification indicating DeLand residency will be required. Including nonresidents created a demand much larger than the city staff and volunteers could handle, Riger reported.

DeLand sets aside a Saturday morning in April every year to give away trees grown at the tree nursery.

The nursery, run by Frierson, is dedicated to preserving DeLand's green, tree-shaded character.

Frierson said 18 Breakfast Rotary volunteers, along with DeLand Forestry Superintendent Mariellen Calabro and other city workers, will be on hand to help with the 2010 giveaway.

For 22 years, DeLand has earned annual Tree City USA status from the Arbor Day Foundation.

"A community, its elected officials and its citizens that provide needed care for its trees deserve recognition and thanks," said John Rosenow, chief executive of the Arbor Day Foundation. "Trees are a vital component of the infrastructure in our cities and towns, and they also provide environmental benefits."

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