

Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation works to preserve unique habitat

Soon the snow shoveling will be over, and the first tree buds will begin to appear. But have you ever considered what effort and thought goes into ensuring that the trees in the public and protected areas across the Oak Ridges Moraine (ORM) stay green.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation (ORMF) in partnership with Trees Ontario (TO) is giving Mother Nature a helpful nudge by providing funds to ensure that a plentiful supply of seedlings will be available for planting on the ORM.

A key part of this proj-

ect is to ensure that an adequate supply of seed is collected from the Oak Ridges Moraine. Collecting locally on the ORM from healthy trees ensures that the seed is well adapted to regional soil and other unique living conditions.

A small army of expert technicians and scientists are working hard to ensure that suitable seed from the native tree species of the Moraine are collected and nurtured into planting stock.

It is important to the future forest that seed from the best of the native trees

found on the Moraine form the breeding stock's foundation.

The Oak Ridges Moraine is one of southern Ontario's most important and vulnerable ecological regions. It crosses 32 municipalities and stretches 160 kilometers across southern Ontario from the Trent River to the Niagara Escarpment.

The native trees of the ORM have adapted and evolved to fit a specific climate and other environmental conditions, and they are the best choice for successful reforestation and restoration of the Moraine's forest cover.

The TO/ORMF partnership supports seed supply forecasting and collecting efforts. First, the areas are identified where prime seed is developing on the ORM. Then teams are dispatched to collect it. Once collected it is sent to the Ontario Tree Seed Plant in Angus for specialized storage.

When required, the seeds are sent to nurseries for growing and then the seedlings are used by planting agencies for restoration projects on the Moraine.

Collecting seed is not

easy.

The most obvious challenge is "picking them" from high in the branches once the best trees have been selected. This is done by monitoring the developing seed crop throughout the summer months as with most species the seed matures late August through September-October.

As seed matures one may climb to collect the seed but due to safety reasons most collectors wait for the trees to drop the mature seeds/cones or allow the squirrels to cut the cones and drop them to the ground. If ground cover will allow some collectors place tarps or ground sheets around the base of the selected trees and the seeds/cones fall onto the tarps and this makes for easier gathering at collection time.

Planting non-native species or native species grown from unknown seed sources should be avoided, as it can result in poor quality trees or reduced biodiversity if the seed is all from the same source. Planting with non-native and inappropriate tree stock substitution can occur when there are few

native tree seedlings available.

Tree nurseries and tree planting agencies are often challenged to undertake long term planning for selecting and growing native species when faced with inadequate or short-term budgets and uneven planting targets.

In past years there have been exceedingly low inventory of some specific seed types including Red Pine, Red Oak, White Spruce and White Pine in specific areas. A current priority is seed from Red and White Pine.

If you are the owner of property on the ORM with high quality examples of these trees and are willing to voluntarily contribute to the seed supply of these trees, we would be pleased to pass your contact information to the Ontario Tree Plant in Angus, Ontario.

The ORMF supports, through funding, extensive forest restoration activities within selected high priority areas on the ORM. To date, over 325 hectares have been funded. Their long-term objective is to increase natural cover and improve the ecological integrity of this important area.