

Balancing Home and Habitat: Living With a Forest Conservation Easement



Anne Arundel County Department of Inspections and Permits
Forestry Program



ANNE ARUNDEL
COUNTY
MARYLAND



Anne Arundel County Forestry Staff

Nathan Markline

Code Enforcement Administrator

Jennifer Fisher

Forestry Program Planner II



Sarah Duffy

Forestry Program Specialist II

Mackenzie Kirschbaum

Forestry Program Specialist II

Contact Us at
Forestry@aacounty.org



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What is a Forest Conservation Easement?



Forest Conservation Easements (FCE) are a legal agreement that protect forests by limiting certain activities and preserving an area of land as forest indefinitely. Its terms, conditions, and area are recorded in official land records and transfer with ownership of the land.

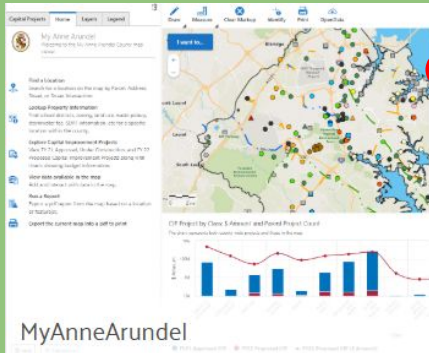
These agreements commonly prohibit removing vegetation, clearing, grading, building, or changing the natural character of the land without written permission from Anne Arundel County.

The goal is to maintain the preserved areas as a natural forest.

Navigating My Anne Arundel



- Put <https://maps.aacounty.org/> into your search engine
- Click MyAnneArundel



[MyAnneArundel](#)

Find neighborhood information such as:

Council Person, Capital Improvement Projects, Trash/Recycling Collection Day, School Service Area, Nearest Police, Fire and other Community Facilities

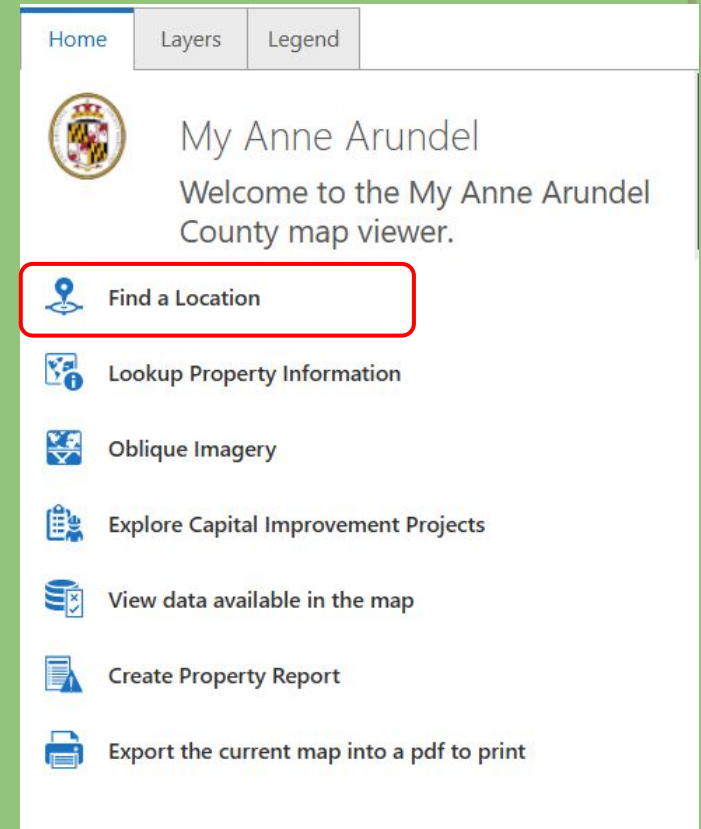
To learn more about the capabilities of MyAnneArundel please watch our overview video:

[MyAnneArundel Overview Video](#)

Navigating My Anne Arundel



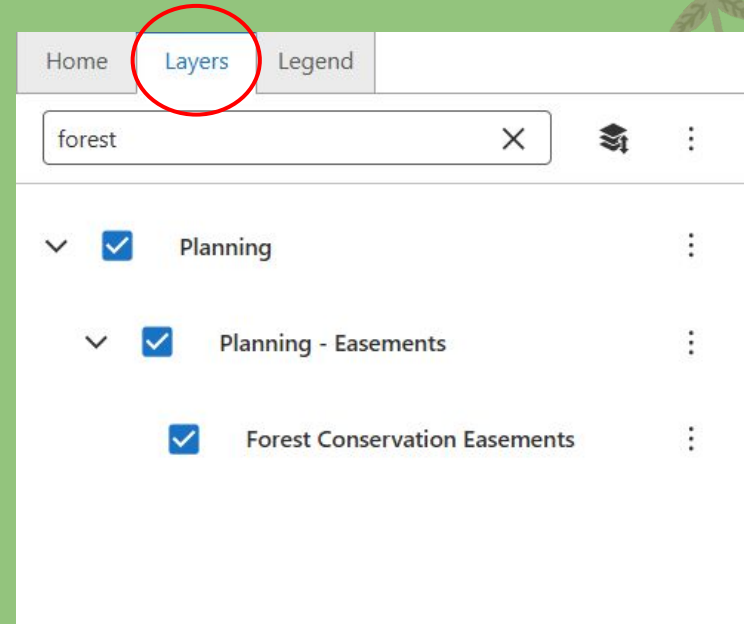
- From the left home bar, select “Find a Location”
- From the same left bar, select “Find an address”
- Type in the address
 - TIPS: Type in the number and street for your address. The rest will auto-populate.
- Once you search the address, the map will take you to it.



Navigating My Anne Arundel



- Next, navigate to Layers Tab on the left hand side
- In the “Filter Layers by Title” section, search for the layer you are looking for. In this case, search “forest” and the forest conservation easement layer will show up.
- Make sure all of the required boxes are checked. Planning, planning-easements and forest conservation easements must be checked for you to see the layer.



TIPS: If the blue checkmark is not next to the layer, it is not turned on.

Who is Responsible for Maintenance?

Property owner(s).



What is Maintenance?

Maintenance of a forest conservation easement is important to improve ecological value of the easement, control invasive plants and vines and manage dead and dying trees.



Cutting dead/dying trees



Controlling or removing invasive vines and invasive vegetation



Planting native trees and shrubs to encourage rapid growth



Mulch areas where invasive plants are growing with a thin (3") layer of mulch

Maintenance Categories: Forest Health



- Managing invasive plants
- Pruning trees to increase tree health
- Replanting native trees and shrubs
- Mulching forest floor to reduce invasive plant growth
- Timber stand improvement
- Pest and disease management
- Habitat restoration projects



Maintenance Categories: Hazard and Safety

- Removing hazard trees
- Pruning limbs away from structures
- Storm damage clean up



© D. HILLERKE 1 CSY Timemark Verified



What is Pruning?

The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) defines pruning as “selective removal of plant parts to meet specific goals and objectives”. Pruning can be performed to improve the health of the trees or shrubs, to remove dead branches, to reduce potential hazards, and for aesthetic purposes.



Improper Pruning Practices

A licensed tree expert should follow ANSI A300 Standards. Correct pruning of a tree can enhance tree health while improper pruning can harm tree health.



No cutting of more than 25% of the crown or any individual limb



No elevation pruning above bottom 1/3 of tree



No lions-tailing



No topping

What Activities are Acceptable?

- Planting new native trees and shrubs
- Passive recreation like hiking and bird watching
- With an approved Vegetation Management Plan, Habitat Enhancement Plan, or Standard Grading Plan:
 - Cutting vines from trees
 - Removal of invasive species
 - Cutting dead/dying trees to the ground
 - Pruning trees and other vegetation
 - Natural surface walking paths no wider than 6ft.



What Permit/Plan is Right for Your Project?

Work within a Forest Conservation Easement requires prior approval from the Anne Arundel County Forestry Office.

Vegetation Management Plan (VMP)

- Projects that impact less than 5,000 sqft
- Individual tree removals (dead trees, hazard trees, invasive trees)
- Tree pruning for health and safety
- Invasive vegetation removal
- Create non-structural access pathway

Habitat Enhancement Plan (HEP)

- Projects than impact 5,000 sqft or more and enhance natural habitat and ecological balance
- Tree pruning for health and safety
- Invasive vegetation removal
- Non-commercial timber stand improvement





STANDARD VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

For proposed removal of existing natural vegetation in the Critical Area; recorded Forest Conservation Easements or within Bog Protection areas

Department of Inspections & Permits
Forestry Program
2664 Riva Road, P.O. Box 6675
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
Ph: (410)222-7441 F: (410)222-7752
Revised April 2023

Owner Name: _____
Mailing Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Telephone: _____ FAX: _____
E-Mail Address: _____

Site Information (if same as mailing address list same)
Site Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Subdivision Name: _____
Tax Map: _____, Block: _____, Parcel: _____
Tax Account #: _____

Is the proposed work within 100 feet of tidal waters, wetlands, a tributary stream to those resources and/or adjoining steep slopes? **Yes** ___ **No** ___
Is the proposed work in the Critical Area; but outside the 100-foot buffer? **Yes** ___ **No** ___
Is the proposed work outside the Critical Area; but within a Forest Conservation Easement? **Yes** ___ **No** ___
Do any Subdivision Plat notes, community restrictions or Utility Easements affect your property? **Yes** ___ **No** ___
(If yes, please describe in the narrative description section.)
Active Permit Application Information (Note: Projects with active building and/or grading permits may be rejected)
Building Permit #: _____ Grading Permit#: _____

PROPOSED WORK (Check and Complete Information as Appropriate)

___ This plan is for the removal of individual trees.
___ Number of trees to be removed Have trees been marked for field review? **Yes** ___ **No** ___
___ This plan is for the pruning of individual trees
___ Number of trees to be pruned Have trees been marked for field review? **Yes** ___ **No** ___
___ This plan is for the removal of woody vegetation and eradication of the following invasive vegetation:
___ Poison Ivy ___ Greenbriar ___ Grapevine ___ Phragmites ___ Japanese honeysuckle
___ Asiatic Bittersweet ___ English Ivy ___ Bamboo ___ Other (list): _____
___ This plan is to provide a non-structural access path (less than 6' width)

REQUIREMENTS

Plan: Attach a copy of a survey of the site that accurately reflects where individual trees are to be removed or pruned. In lieu of a survey plan, provide a sketch drawing in the space indicated and showing the above information. Be sure to include structures, utilities, 100-foot buffer, tidal and non-tidal wetlands, steep slopes, shoreline, woods line, limits of disturbance, replanting types and location and any other special features or sensitive areas.

Narrative: Describe the existing conditions and proposed work to be accomplished, amount of disturbed area, indicate mitigation measures, replanting or enhancement work, number and species of plants to be installed, when the work will be done. If the work is to be phased, indicate scheduling.

Photographs: Submission of photographic documentation is strongly encouraged. Submit a panoramic view of the buffer area to be covered by this management plan in sufficient detail to **clearly distinguish** the canopy layer, understorey layer and shrub layer. For vine control, diseased, dead or declining trees, or other problems, include a representative photograph of those conditions. **This is particularly important when requesting emergency approvals.**

Tips for VMP Applications:

- Color photos are always helpful!
- Tag the trees in the field
- Be ready to complete replanting requirements
- *Do not begin work until an approved VMP is returned*
- Make sure to have a copy of the VMP posted on-site while work is being completed



2664 Riva Road
Annapolis MD 21401
<https://www.aacounty.org/inspections-and-permits/forestry>
Phone: (410) 222-7741

Habitat Enhancement Plan Application

Tax Account Number _____

Subdivision Name (if applicable) _____ Lot _____ Block _____

Location _____
Number Street

Owner _____
Name Phone Email

Address State Zip

Proposed Work _____

Critical Area Designation _____ Distance from water to disturbed area _____ ft.

Steepest slope disturbed _____ % Lot size _____ Area to be disturbed _____ sq. ft.

I/we certify that I/we have the authority to make this application; that the proposed work is authorized by the owner in fee; that the information above is correct and that I/we have chosen this method to satisfy our sediment control obligation. I/we certify that the proposed construction meets the conditions and limitations established and contained in the *Anne Arundel Soil Conservation District Standard Sediment and Erosion Control Plan*; and I/we have the ability and will meet all the limitations and conditions set forth by said plan.

Owner's Signature _____ Date _____

Applicant's Name (please print) _____
Company Name – if a corporation

Approved - Compliance with the Habitat Enhancement Plan for Anne Arundel County, and:

the attached Standard Plan allows for site grading without a separate grading permit and is subject to any special conditions listed below. Approval is granted for two years unless otherwise noted.

Not Approved - Grading permit required. Site fails to meet the conditions as detailed in the *Anne Arundel Soil Conservation District Standard Sediment and Erosion Control Plan*.

Inspector _____
Sign and Print Date

SPECIAL CONDITIONS:

Tips for HEP Applications:

- An HEP cannot be used to clear for, or in preparation for development activities.
- A management plan to ensure maintenance and management of areas (short term and long term) is required.
- A pre-construction meeting will be required to ensure the quality and understanding of the proposed work.
- We recommend contacting AA County Forestry staff to discuss proposed HEP applications before you submit.

For pruning projects outside of the Buffer in an FCE that will impact 2,500 sqft or less, no permits are required.

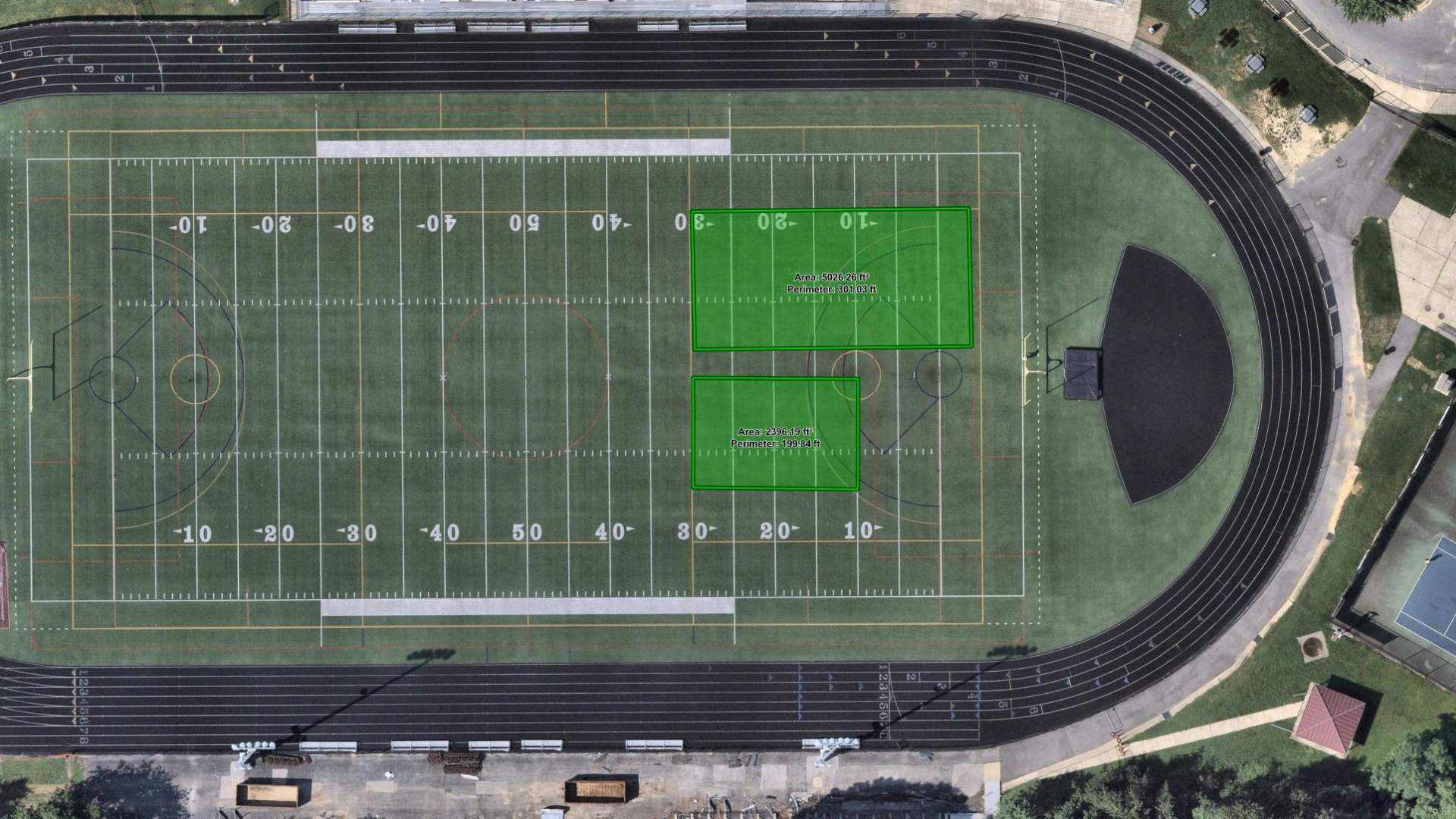


Visualizing 2,500 square feet

**Mature trees can
achieve substantial
canopy coverage,
sometimes exceeding
3,000 square feet**

**Average parking
spot is
approximately
150 square feet**





Area: 5026.26 ft²
Perimeter: 301.08 ft

Area: 2396.19 ft²
Perimeter: 199.84 ft



Area: 161.56 ft²
Perimeter: 53.70 ft



Area: 589.28 ft²
Perimeter: 106.72 ft





Area: 3447.39 ft²
Perimeter: 226.53 ft

What is an Invasive Plant Species?

1. A plant that is non-native to an ecosystem
2. A plant whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health (USDA)



English Ivy



Multiflora Rose



Japanese Stiltgrass



Kudzu Vine



Phragmites



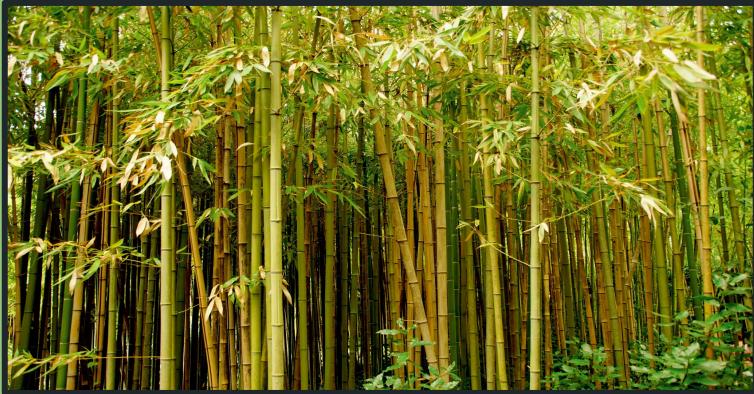
Japanese Knotweed



Asian Bittersweet Vine



Tree of Heaven



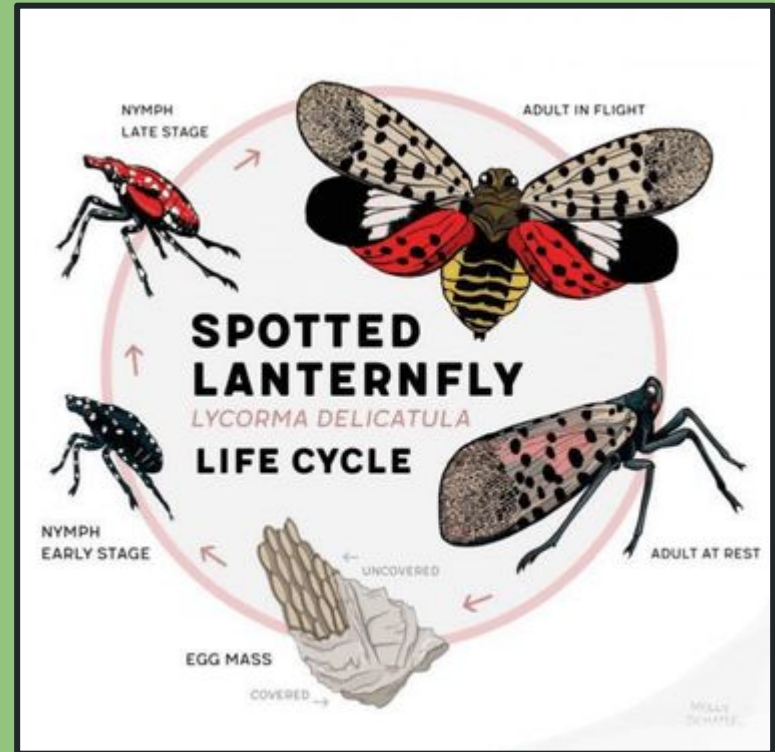
Bamboo



Japanese Honeysuckle

Tree of Heaven and Spotted Lantern Flies

- Spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*) is an invasive insect native to eastern Asia.
- **They cannot bite or sting.**
- Spotted lanternfly has piercing-sucking mouthparts to feed on plant sap from a variety of plants, but the most common host tree is Tree of Heaven.
- Spotted lanternfly is mainly a nuisance pest and has not been shown to cause significant damage to otherwise healthy trees and garden plants.



For more information on managing Spotted Lanternflies in your community,
please refer to UMD Extension's webpage:



Spotted Lanternfly Egg Mass



Adult Spotted Lanternfly



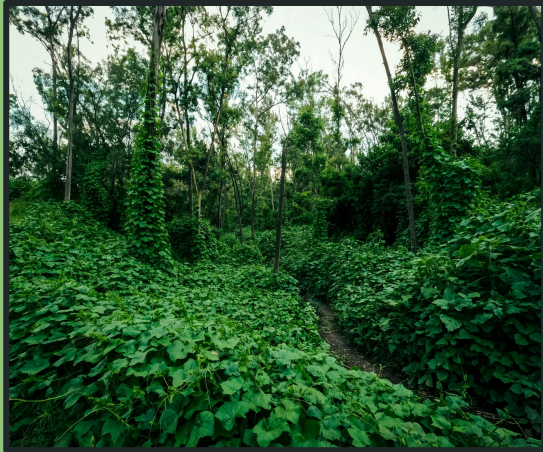
Invasive Plant Management

- Successful management of invasive plants is built in proper planning and persistent maintenance.
- Foresters, Landscape Professionals, and other Natural Resource Professionals can help you design and implement a management plan.
- Cutting them once only makes them spread.
 - You must cut them over and over until they stop re-sprouting
 - Careful application of herbicide per label instructions can significantly reduce sprouting and shorten maintenance schedules.



Invasive Vine Management

1. Cut invasive vines from base of tree
2. Remove and bag clippings (throw away, do not compost)
3. Appropriate herbicide applications can help
4. Multiple mechanical or chemical applications may be necessary



Anne Arundel County Weed Resistance Volunteers

Volunteer action is a great way to increase the success of invasive management projects!



Scan here to sign up as a Weed Warrior Volunteer or to coordinate a volunteer day for your community!



Forestry Resources

Forestry Program FAQs	https://www.aacounty.org/sites/default/files/2026-02/blue-notice-faqs-20260203.pdf
Find an ISA Certified Arborist	https://certificates.directory.isa-arbor.com/
Find a Maryland Licensed Tree Expert	https://dnr.maryland.gov/forests/Pages/licensed-tree-experts.aspx
Anne Arundel County Forestry Grant Programs	https://cbtrust.org/grants/ https://unitygardens.org/grant-information/
Vegetation Management Plan	https://www.aacounty.org/inspections-and-permits/forestry/vegetation-management-plans
Hazard Tree Information Document	Hazard Tree Information 2.13.26 NM.pdf
Native Plant List	https://www.aacounty.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/native-plant-list.pdf

Who Do I Call? 311

Tree Location	Who to Contact?	Website
In county public road R/W	Bureau of Highways. Please type in your address into the website linked to identify your road district. Call that number and give them the information about the tree.	https://www.aacounty.org/public-works/highways/road-district-lookup
On your own property	You are responsible for trees on your property.	Contact forestry if you have any vegetation management/permit questions.
On your neighbors property	Please see Hazard Tree Document	Hazard Tree Information 2.13.26 NM.pdf
On County Parks	Please call the specific park to let them know about the tree or concern.	https://www.aacounty.org/recreation-parks/parks
On County owned property	Please contact the Bureau of Highways. Please type in your address into the website linked to identify your road district. Call that number and give them the information about the tree.	https://www.aacounty.org/public-works/highways/road-district-lookup
In a storm water management area	Please contact the storm water management division.	https://www.aacounty.org/inspections-and-permits/inspections/stormwater-management-inspections

Forest Benefits for the Community

Forests soak up stormwater and help reduce erosion.

Trees filter pollutants from the air to improve air quality.

Forests help recharge and filter groundwater reserves.

Forests provide habitat for insects, amphibians, birds and other creatures who need a home.

Time spent in forests and greenspaces reduces stress, lowers blood pressure, and improves mental health.

Community forests give families a way to experience nature and biodiversity close to home.



Making the Most of your Forest

Learn about the insects and animals that frequent your forest conservation easement area.

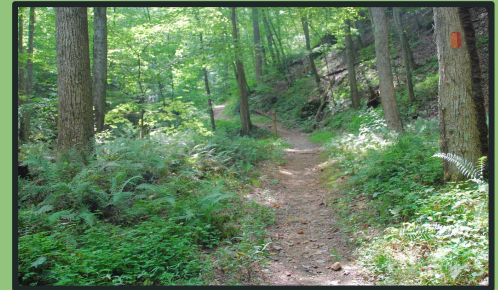
Download Seek, iNaturalist or other identification tools to learn about native trees and shrubs.

Hike or walk through the forest and soak in clean air, vitamin D and the sights and smells.

Touch the leaves, wet moss, or investigate under logs to ground yourself.

Bring a pair of binoculars to engage in bird watching.

Take your friends, dogs or family on a walk to connect with nature.

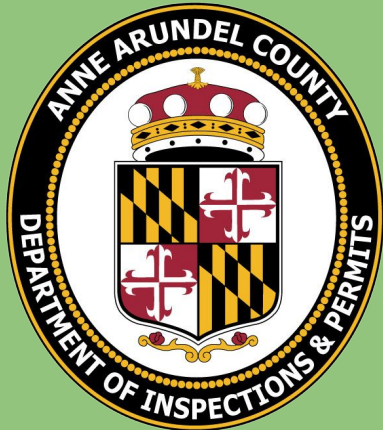


Contact Us!

Anne Arundel County Department of
Inspections and Permits
Forestry Program

(410)-222-7441

Forestry@aacounty.org



Scan here to access the Forestry website

