

# Blackburn College Plants 115 Trees Completing Campus Landscaping

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CARLINVILLE - Blackburn College is already a Tree Campus within a Tree City, but they have been visibly making large strides into becoming even more sustainable on campus. When grounds supervisor Nick McKorkle began working at Blackburn, he crafted a five-year plan to enhance the campus tree population and update the landscaping for every building. Presently, in year three of the plan, McKorkle and Blackburn student workers have already surpassed their goal of planting 115 trees.

While there was a significant focus on species diversity and increasing native plants on campus, decisions regarding tree species were also coordinated with Blackburn's Bee Program to ensure the plan included pollinators. As a result, the 80-acre campus is now home to new trees from 19 different family classifications, 48 different types of

cultivars, and 79 pollinators. The new trees include natives like Black Gum and Catalpa trees and pollinating trees such as Linden and Yellowwoods placed near campus beehives.

One of only nine federally-recognized Work Colleges, Blackburn has the only program in the nation fully managed by students. Student workers help in all aspects of tree labor - they can be seen planting trees, helping select the best placement, and maintaining or enhancing current landscaping. McKorkle, students, and the Blackburn community have dedicated nearly 445 hours toward tree maintenance on campus in the last year.

With a long history of leading in sustainability, Blackburn is also the only college in downstate Illinois to receive the designation of 2020 Tree Campus Higher Education from the Arbor Day Foundation. When asked about this honor, McKorkle stated that being a Tree Campus means “valuing the benefits that trees give you.” He went on to explain that not only are trees helpful environmentally to provide habitat, but also visually helpful thanks to their shade, color, and size. He said creating a nice aesthetic across campus will not only make current students feel better about how the campus looks, but it will also appear more welcoming to prospective students and the region.