

Green Teens Planting Seeds For Green Careers

Tree Trust Program Funded by MTGF Prepares Next Generation of Green Industry Workers

Do you remember being a kid and imagining what you would be when you grew up? Did you ever imagine you would be doing what you are now, working in the green industry?

For many kids these days, green careers may take a back seat to the typical standbys (e.g. fire fighter, doctor, teacher). To change that reality, in the past year, the Minnesota Turf and Grounds Foundation has generously supported a program newly developed by Tree Trust, a nonprofit with a mission to improve the community environment by investing in people (tree-trust.org). The program, called Green Teens, is changing young lives – and it aims to change the course of the green industry for generations to come.

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The need for this program became clear after Tree Trust had operated the summer Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) for many years. Through the YCC, teams of youth would spend their summers completing conservation projects in parks and public green spaces all over the Twin Cities metro area.

At the end of each summer, many teens wanted more. They wanted to continue the learning, work, and team-building they were doing through the YCC, but there was no way for them to do that. The Green Teens program was developed to give them just that opportunity.



With the goal of year-round engagement with youth, Green Teens provides hands-on educational and work activities to nurture their interest in the green industry – and to help them pursue green careers. At the end of the school-year based program, job coaches work with the youth to provide a meaningful paid summer internship with one of Tree Trust’s employer partners.

Fifteen youth were enrolled in the Green Teens program at the end of last summer. Starting in September 2018, these youth experienced a variety of educational activities, including a hands-on tree planting event at Westwood Hills Nature Center, a tour of Malmbourg’s Greenhouses, and a Youth Engaged in Arboriculture event involving the University of Minnesota Forestry Department at the Minnesota Society of Arboriculture Tree Climbing Championship. Of these fifteen youth, nine were placed in green internships for summer 2019.

“We are thrilled with the results so far,” says Smith. “The youth are loving the program, and we know we’re helping them create meaning in their lives – and in the futures they are planning for themselves. At the same time, we know we’re helping strengthen the worker pipeline for the green industry we love so much. What better win-win could there be?”

