

What Is ATREP?

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Will you be planting trees this spring? Are you interested in participating in a citizen science project? If you answered yes to one or both of these questions, you should consider participating in the Assisted Tree Range Expansion Project (ATREP)! This citizen science project will involve private landowners and community groups in the planting and monitoring of tree species that are predicted to thrive in our region under future climate conditions. Simply defined, assisted range expansion is “the human-assisted movement of species to areas just outside their established range in response to climate change, facilitating or mimicking natural range expansion.”

The first phase of this project will promote the planting of six tree species whose native ranges reach their upper limits in southern to mid-Michigan. The ultimate goal of the project is to increase ecosystem diversity, offset widespread tree die-offs, and improve the resilience of our future forests. The Leelanau Conservation District will be selling the following six selected ATREP species in our annual tree seedling sale: swamp white oak, tulip tree, black gum, hackberry, sassafras and shagbark hickory. You can read more about the unique habitat requirements and wildlife benefits of each species on the project website (ATREP.net), and consult with District Forester, Kama Ross, about which species are right for your land. Anyone who wants to participate in ATREP can order their seedlings and tree protection supplies through the conservation district by mail or phone, pick up their trees in late April and then register for the project with the District Forester.

Participants will record simple annual measurements related to tree growth and health according to our simple protocol, and submit the data themselves on our website or with the help of the District Forester. This data will provide valuable insights to local foresters, and participants will enjoy the various perks of these unique species as they grow in our landscape. That being said, the planting of these trees is experimental and they are not necessarily guaranteed to thrive (although that is the aim, and we have thoughtfully selected the offered species based on the best available science and management recommendations); participants should view their investment as a contribution to advancing the understanding of our regional forest dynamics that could also provide them with some lovely new tree cover in the long-term.

You can read updates on our website as the project progresses; all of the trees planted will be identified on the interactive “Map” tab of the ATREP website. Please contact Kama Ross at: kama.ross@macd.org, or 231.256.9783, or fill out our contact form at www.ATREP.net if you are interested in participating!