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## **The Grove Online Community Expands Throughout Southeast**

*Virtual community encouraging citizens to protect urban forests now available in 13 states*

**ATLANTA, April 29, 2010** – [The Grove](http://www.AmericanGrove.org) ([www.AmericanGrove.org](http://www.AmericanGrove.org)), a virtual community to plant trees and protect the urban tree canopy, is now open to users in 13 states throughout the Southeast to mark this year's [National Arbor Day](#) on April 30.

Residents of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia may now become members of The Grove. The goal of The Grove social networking site is to enable members to share the experience of planting trees and commemorating special life moments with family, friends and their communities.

Members can upload pictures, videos and captions of their tree planting experiences into albums called "groves," discuss tree-related issues with other members and view tree planting events happening in their communities. The Grove also offers an interactive tree match tool that provides guidance on choosing the right tree to commemorate a special event, as well as information on tree planting, tree care tips and the benefits of maintaining a healthy urban forest.

"The Grove serves as an information center for tree and nature enthusiasts who are interested in green living and want to participate in tree planting and care of the urban forest," said Susan Reisch, urban and community forestry coordinator for the Georgia Forestry Commission. "The online community provides a place to share information about trees and related issues and activities at the regional, state and community level."

The online community was originally created by the [Georgia Urban Forest Council \(GUFC\)](#), the [Georgia Forestry Commission \(GFC\)](#) and the [U.S. Forest Service](#) in February 2009 for Georgia citizens.

"State forestry agencies throughout the Southeast wanted to get their residents involved in The Grove once they saw the participation we had in the GeorgiaGrove.org community," said Mary Lynne Beckley, executive director of GUFC. "The community is an invaluable tool that encourages members to create and share their legacy by planting trees for future generations. Opening the community to more members furthers our commitment to educate the public on the importance of trees in our lives."

To become a member of The Grove, sign up to create a profile at [www.AmericanGrove.org/TheGrove](http://www.AmericanGrove.org/TheGrove). Original members of GeorgiaGrove.org are invited to recreate their profiles in the enhanced community.

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**About Georgia Urban Forest Council**

The Georgia Urban Forest Council (GUFC) is a nonprofit organization that promotes the benefits of community forests and the importance of managing and protecting Georgia's tree canopy. Its mission is to sustain Georgia's green legacy by helping communities grow healthy trees. For more information, visit [www.guafc.org](http://www.guafc.org).

**About Georgia Forestry Commission**

The Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) is a state agency responsible for providing leadership, service and education in the protection and conservation of Georgia's forest resources. Georgia Forestry Commission foresters help community leaders recognize the value of trees and plan with them in mind, which translates into cleaner air and water and healthier, safer, more attractive places to live, work and play. For more information, visit [www.GaTrees.org](http://www.GaTrees.org).

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