

Dogwood program grows: Volunteers plant about 300 trees in the snow

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Volunteers across Knoxville didn't let Saturday's snowfall stop them from planting around 300 dogwood trees in the city for the Bazillion Blooms program.

The North Hills Garden club, along with a few volunteers, placed 19 trees on the North Hills Garden byway.

"A lot of the dogwoods are aged out from what they started when the festival began," North Hills Garden Club member Judith Mallory said. "What we've been trying to do is fill in the holes where the trees have died. We feel we're being a bit ingenious. We're putting them where we know people will take care of them. People have adopted them who will make sure all year that they get water. We have other places where we could put them, but we're not confident that they'll be taken care of."

As part of the Dogwood Arts Festival, the Bazillion Blooms program is trying to repopulate dogwood trees in Knoxville, said Lisa Duncan, executive director of the festival. The trees planted Saturday are resistant to anthracnose and powdery mildew, diseases that can harm the popular flowering tree.

"We've lost quite a few due to age, disease and construction," Duncan said. "With the Dogwood Arts Festival being a springtime celebration of the natural and cultural beauty of East Tennessee, we felt strongly that we needed to enhance the dogwood population."

Eleanor Kilpatrick and Janine Obenschain, members of the North Hills Garden Club, planted three trees outside Kilpatrick's home, which she will tend to.

"There were three dogwoods here but now they're gone," Obenschain said. "People come around the corner and drive on the median and just run over the trees. And then mowers sometimes get a little rambunctious."

Kilpatrick and Obenschain were planting the trees according to a demonstration provided by professionals at the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture. Robert Claytor volunteered to pick up the trees from UT and attended one of the demonstrations. He then relayed that information back to the North Hills group.

"The disease-resistant trees are a lot more expensive," Claytor said. "That's why we wanted to make sure everyone knew how to plant them."

Over the next three years, Bazillion Blooms will plant more dogwoods and have communitywide tree planting days to restore the dogwood population in Knoxville.

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