

## **Reforestation Industry News**

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Changes in the nonprofit reforestation industry continue. First, the number of tree-planting nonprofits continues to grow; making it more difficult for individuals, businesses and organizations to determine which ones provide the best bang for your buck and which ones are the best fit for one's needs. Also, some orgs are really offshoots of cities or other governmental agencies - but hide or disguise their affiliation. Yet others do not plant the trees themselves but forward the funds to groups actually performing the planting.

Second, quality continues to improve with the highest rated orgs that perform the reforestation themselves (see 'Reforestation Organizations of Note' below). This may be better access to fresh water, improved tree species selection and providing longer and better training (and tech) to the community stewards tending to the new forests.

Third, more orgs are providing sources of energy to needy communities. This may be solar, geothermal, wind and biogas systems. Doing so goes beyond reforestation to better assist communities in need.

Fourth, fuel-efficient cook stoves are also being provided by more reforestation organizations. These stoves reduce the demand for wood while eliminating (via chimneys) indoor air pollution causing all sorts of respiratory diseases. Sadly, biochar cookstoves are not as popular, which is unfortunate as they can use non-wood fuel (most organic material).

Lastly, some reforestation nonprofits are helping provide micro-credits, carbon credits, water systems, alternative energy, employment and other approaches helping communities.

In all, the upper end of the industry is increasing in quality and forming niches where bars and standards are continuing to be set. Many locations still cannot provide media (photo and video) for weather, theft, power and other reasons but an increase in digital media in other locations continues.

## **SPOTLIGHT: TreeTime and Rainforest Alliance**

Two reforestation nonprofits stand-out right now: TreeTime and Rainforest Alliance. TreeTime is an app-based, New Zealand reforestation nonprofit setting numerous bars. The app displays the number of trees planted, the carbon offset adjusted daily, trophies, and other data. The trees are legally protected. Biannually, drones survey the forests and your specific tree(s) can be visually seen on the app. Contributors also get planting coordinates of your tree to within 10 meters squared accuracy. One can also share your reforestation activities to social media. The app even gives data on species, age, developmental stage and a unique identifying code for each tree called a 'Bark Code.' Contributors are thus connected to their specific trees more than any other reforestation nonprofit!

Rainforest Alliance has upgraded its certification standards for Rainforest Alliance farms worldwide. While similar to Fairtrade, there are also differences such as RA's focus on sustainability. One can see the details at:

<https://www.treehugger.com/rainforest-alliance-has-new-certification-standard-5120129>

It is really worth following the link as there is a lot to take-in and digest. The discussion on ethics is crucial as such communications best describe how nonprofits operate behind the scenes.

## **Other Reforestation Organizations of Note**

The following are particular reforestation nonprofits that are setting bars and standing out in specific ways or aspects of operations.

Forests For Monarchs (formerly La Cruz Habitat Protection Project) reforests land around the monarch butterfly habitat in the mountains of Michoacan and Mexico State, as well as in the Highland Lakes watershed area and the Uruapan avocado farming areas. They have always had an exceptionally strong focus towards documentation and transparency of their work. Much of their focus is towards protecting the endangered

monarch butterfly by preserving its over-wintering habitat. My wife and I spent time with the Founder (Jose Luis Alvarez), inspected the seed beds growing the trees and met some of the personnel. Exceptionally impressed!

Trees, Water and People (TWP) works in tribal lands, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Aside from their focus on quality rather than quantity, TWP stands out for their cook stoves, carbon offset program, and provide renewable energy solutions into Central America and US tribal lands. In Guatemala, part of their approach is to help correct Gender Based Violence faced by Guatemalan women (as part of the 2020 USAID RISE Challenge). They have always struck me as a quality-focused organization with none of the issues plaguing certain orgs in the industry. Never saw a problem or heard a complaint - they have been highly professional since day 1!

Plant-It 2020 (this article's author) is an international reforestation nonprofit that works with individuals, businesses and organizations towards finding the optimal tree-planting nonprofit partner via defining goals and then performing a cost-benefit analysis. We also stand out by 1) focusing our reforestation efforts towards no-logging locations, 2) posting a 'Code-Of-Ethics' on our website, 3) providing industry insider information to the general public such as our renowned 'Scams and Deceptions in the Tree-Planting Nonprofit Industry' article, and 4) attempting to elevate the industry by communicating what bars and standards are out there so that other reforestation nonprofits will rise to be competitive.

Sustainable Harvest International (SHI) is a quality-based reforestation organization that works in Belize, Honduras and Panama. They work with family farms; instructing them to switch from slash-and-burn approaches to those methods with greater sustainability. Their focus is not simply to plant trees but to provide long-term instruction in environmental stewardship, commercialization, small business development, micro-finance and community leadership. It is a five year (average) relationship with each farm. Their website provides transparency in the form of interactive maps with data. SHI reeks of quality and some of the bars they

set include long-term commitment, quality over numbers, excellence in training and transparency.

Trees For The Future (TFTF) provides a four-year training program towards creating and maintaining 'forest gardens' in Cameroon, Kenya, Senegal, Uganda and Tanzania. The Forest Garden is a combination of trees, shrubs, fruits, vegetables and grains operating in synergy with each other. They are involved with soil testing, creating seed banks, and their transparency includes the use of aerial surveying/remote sensing via drone monitoring and LIDAR scans. In addition, TFTF assists with farmers improving access to water for their forests and crops. TFTF has slimmed its operations and is a role model for excellence in reforestation!

Eden Reforestation Projects (ERP) doesn't simply plant trees but also employs local people, which helps reduce local poverty. They plant in Nepal, Madagascar, Haiti, Indonesia, Mozambique, Kenya, Honduras and Nicaragua. One of the aspects distinguishing ERP is the hiring of guards to protect certain forests; including in some cases a guard endowment. Their reforestation focus is also towards no-logging locations. Villagers are also provided with fuel efficient dry wood stoves and solar parabolic stoves; somewhat reducing the need for charcoal. Their long-term survival rate tends to be very high for the locations they plant.

SeedTree is most famous for their excellent work in Nepal where over 3,000,000 trees were planted via their nurseries and programs. Their environmental education efforts include a course of study for classes in rural communities. Never satisfied, they helped establish a secondary college for natural science education at the award winning Tulsi School in Tulsipur, Dang, Nepal; allowing disadvantaged students to remain in the area and receive a quality higher education. Projects include increasing access to fresh water, providing smokeless stoves and interestingly, biogas systems, which is a latrine system providing fuel, destroying methane, reducing labor, providing lighting, etc. New programs include efforts benefiting Peru, Ecuador and microcredits.

Arbor Day Foundation set some bars for US city tree-planting efforts including their Tree City USA and Tree Line USA programs. The Tree City USA program catalyzes cities to plant urban trees in intelligent ways using proper methodology. The Tree Line USA program partners with the National Association of State Foresters to ensure that urban forestry meets best practices in having city trees near power lines. For city reforestation, Arbor Day certainly stands out for its excellence!

\* Any mistakes in the above reforestation organization descriptions are solely the fault of Plant-It 2020. Please contact us at [plantit@icloud](mailto:plantit@icloud) for a correction.

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## **WHERE IS THE NONPROFIT REFORESTATION INDUSTRY AT?**

There is a greater focus in three areas: transparency, quality and communications. This is due to a combination of market forces (where clients are demanding more visuals), competition and plain old increased focus on quality. Tech has also improved. Drones are increasingly being used to evaluate new forest growth. Phones now have cameras built-in. Sadly, there are still certain countries and locations where tech is limited or not available due to theft, monsoons and of course, lack of power.

## **EQUIPMENT**

There is more and better fuel efficient cookstoves being provided to families, alternative energy tech and even biogas systems helping families and communities along with reforestation. Some reforestation nonprofits also assist with improving access to fresh water.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

Websites are providing more and better information and newer groups like TreeTime have taken the lead in app-based info regarding one's contribution. This approach however cannot work in most locations and

the problem of providing media (digital pics and video) to contributors is still present.

## **VETTING**

Some reforestation nonprofits like Plant-It 2020 (and presumably others) periodically have funds to give to reforestation efforts in certain parts of the world like China, Pakistan, Russia, the Middle East, etc. An excellent local agency is required to partner with to ensure that the work gets done. In certain parts of the world however, it is difficult to properly vet local agencies to ensure that excellent reforestation standards are met. What has not yet happened is for those tree-planting nonprofits who give foreign grants and funding to get together and come up with standards and procedures that drastically reduce the possibility that funds are not redirected towards terrorism, criminal activity or personal gain. If you are a reforestation nonprofit that has faced or may face this situation, please contact Plant-It 2020 at [plantit@icloud.com](mailto:plantit@icloud.com) to discuss the issue and help devise standardized approaches.

## **CONCLUSION**

The number of reforestation nonprofits continues to grow and while the best organizations continue to improve, the lesser ones may not be operating at the highest levels of quality. Contributors continue to have the following misconceptions and knowledge gaps:

1. Reforestation nonprofits are all the same doing the same work.
2. Certain reforestation nonprofits are a better match for individuals, businesses and organizations than others depending upon their goals.
3. What the specific benefits are to the environment with each group (it varies by group).
4. What is the cost/benefit ratio of working with a particular group?
5. What are the 'red flags' pertaining to a particular group?
6. What a private 501 C 3 nonprofit foundation is and the limits put on it.

Overall, the industry has completely shifted from the hippie 'Hug-A-Tree business is evil' mindset to one that works with business as a partner. The ability to work with nature in science-based ways continues to evolve and

reforestation continues to improve in quality. Increasingly, the sole reforestation mission expands to include education, better use of water, cookstoves, providing food and medicine; micro-credit, alternative energy systems, land protection, local employment and even women's rights.

Plant-It 2020 continues to act as the industry oversight agency; showcasing which groups are setting bars along with how an individual, business or organization can best choose which reforestation nonprofit is the best match. We do not publicly slur any group; instead choosing to teach contributors what the red flags are and how to find the best match. Additionally, we are quite open that we are not always the best 'fit' for partnership and recommend other excellent reforestation nonprofits to those seeking a perfect match.

Please visit [plantit2020.org](http://plantit2020.org) to receive industry news, become aware of scams and deceptions in the industry, learn which reforestation nonprofits are setting bars in the industry and to plant trees through Plant-It 2020 with integrity and excellence!

## **CONTACT**

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