

Species Diversity

The NJ Tree Foundation focuses on planting a wide variety of species in our community-based programs.

Why is this important?

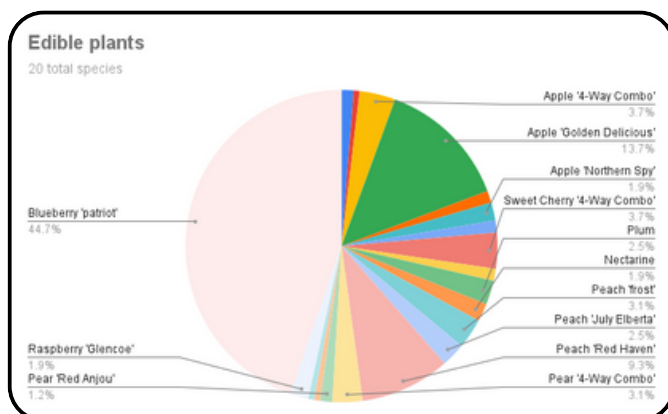
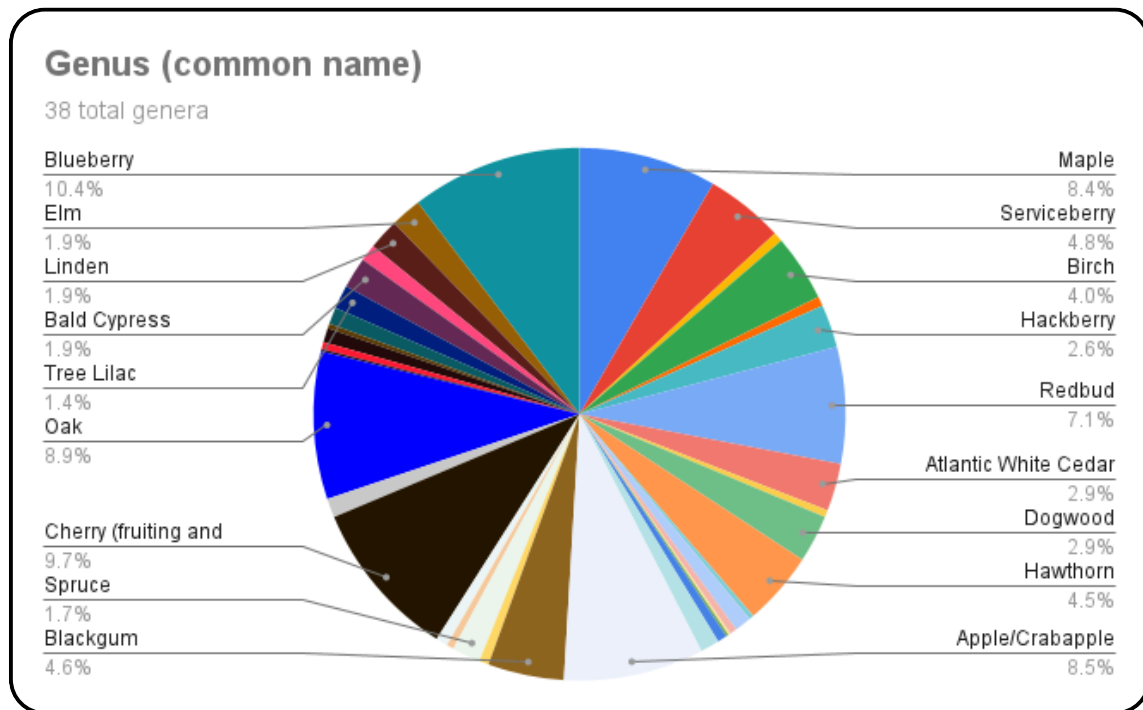
Having a diverse tree canopy helps to create an urban forest that is more resilient in the face of pests, diseases, and even climate change. When species- or genus-specific issues arise, such as the Emerald Ash Borer or Dutch Elm Disease, it can wipe out an entire species/genus. If the only trees planted in a city were Ash or Elm, the entire canopy would be lost! Diverse planting helps to ensure that when these problems arise, our streets are not left completely barren.

How do we achieve this?

We aim to plant at least two different species for each project, with more diversity for larger projects. Our goal is to achieve the **10-20-30 rule** across our programs - this means that each season NJTF plantings are comprised of no more than 10% of one species, 20% from one genus, and 30% from one family. It's not always easy. We have to balance selecting species that will thrive in urban areas with community preferences, and in many areas we are further restricted by overhead utilities and small planting spaces. We also need to think about the diversity of our plantings over time, adding new and different species from year to year. As we improve the diversity of our plantings, the diversity of the urban forests in the cities we serve will improve, creating a more resilient and sustainable tree resource.

How are we doing?

Pretty good! The charts below show the different genera we planted as part of the Urban Airshed Reforestation and Renaissance Trees Programs in fall 2022 and spring 2023. We also included a breakdown of the different varieties of edible plants that we've planted in community gardens and orchards, and given away to residents. In total, we planted a whopping 73 distinct species and cultivars from a total of 38 genera!



Fruit Trees

Fruit trees are an important part of the urban tree canopy, and should also be included when looking at diversity. While flowering cherry and peach trees may seem completely different, they belong to the same genus (*Prunus*) and can be affected by similar pests and diseases. Variety is just as critical in gardens and orchards!