

The Faces of Urban Forestry



Alma Bowen
Retired jeans plant worker



New Trees Bring Hope to Storm-Ravaged Community

On April 27, 2011, 62 tornados swept through northern Alabama. In their wake was a path of death, destruction, and chaos. Alma Bowen remembers that day well. She and her husband were at home when an EF5 tornado passed nearby.

Alma's path to recovery has been long and difficult and progress measured in small steps. One of these steps reflects the urge to replant.

"We didn't have any trees after the tornado," said Alma. "I just needed some trees." Then Alma heard about free tree seedlings being distributed to Hackleburg residents.

"Someone called me after (the Alabama Forestry Commission) had gotten up there and set up," remembers Alma. "I went with my daughter-in-law and got some of the trees." The giveaway was one of many distributions across northern Alabama sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation and Alabama Forestry Commission. The Forestry Commission handled the distribution and began production of additional seedlings with assistance from the U.S. Forest Service.

Though the road to recovery continues, Alma thinks the planting of trees is important. "I think it made a difference," says Alma. The rapid response and distribution of seedlings gave hope to people by helping to show that they could do something to restore their lives and their community.

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— Alma Bowen



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A joint project of U.S. Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry, the National Association of State Foresters, and the Arbor Day Foundation. For more information visit arborday.org/faces