

# Talking Trees Project on USU Campus Aims for Education and Connection

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Every tree has a story, and now you can hear it straight from the source. Thirteen trees on the Utah State University campus in Logan have found their voice through the new Talking Trees project that runs through Oct. 24. Anyone passing through campus is invited to participate.

Dane Gyllenskog, USU campus arborist, chose 13 trees that were given a name, personality, and phone number for people to text. The tree will text back and keep the conversation going. There's also a wish tree for people to write a note and hang for passersby to see. Locations of the talking trees are on [this map](#). Tree response times may vary, according to the number of questions they receive from visitors.

According to project organizer Miles Becker, USU Extension urban forestry specialist, the goal of the project is to increase pride in our environment by connecting with other community members through trees in the local landscape.

"All too often, we pass by one another and the world around us without noticing any of it," he said. "This is an opportunity to slow down, say hello, learn something new, and enjoy a quick break."

Becker said 17 volunteer students keep the tree project running behind the scenes and work to keep it fun and functional. The students come from seven departments on campus. Rayna Becker, grounds manager for USU's Landscape Operation and Maintenance unit, coordinates the student team using her knowledge and experience with

campus plants and trees. The 13 Talking Trees represent more than 7,000 trees that help beautify the USU campus.

"This project is a prototype that will hopefully be replicated on other USU campuses and in communities statewide," said Becker. "It could be used to celebrate a town's history, add an interesting element to an event, or even help heal from destructive events like wildfire or public violence."

Becker referenced the survivor tree from Ground Zero at 9/11 in New York City and the giant banyan tree in Lahaina, Maui, after a wildfire destroyed the town.

"Both trees became symbols of hope and memorials to what was lost for the people in those locations," he said. "The trees gave people a way of doing something that they couldn't do on their own. Because trees play such an important role in our communities, we hope this project strengthens people's connections to the places they live."

For further information or to host a talking tree experience, contact Becker at [miles.becker@usu.edu](mailto:miles.becker@usu.edu).

## Contact

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