

## URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY IN WASHINGTON STATE

NOVEMBER 1, 2024    EDUCATION, FOREST HEALTH, LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES,  
PARTNERSHIPS, PESTS AND DISEASE, TREE TIPS

# Miyawaki Forests: Building Community with Native Plants

*Written by Mike Sanborn*

The Miyawaki forest, commonly referred to as a “tiny” or “pocket” forest, is a green infrastructure design concept that originates from Japan. This restoration process was developed by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki (1928-2021) to help small forests mature at a faster rate than they do on their own. This method can be implemented in Washington communities to help restore degraded soil and barren sites with regionally native plant material. While this design solution may not work on every challenging piece of property, it can be a good fit for many school yards, parks, industrial sites and agricultural fields. The benefits of building a Miyawaki forest include opportunities for robust community input and participation, creation of a diverse, multi-use green space, and fast, observable canopy growth.



(<https://dnrtreelink.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/image-6.jpeg>).

*A drone view of a crescent shaped forest. Plants installed and a dry straw mulch layer being applied around the plants. Photo by William Dennison.*

Miyawaki forests improve soil health conditions with compost, dense plant spacing with many different species to force upright growth, generous irrigation, and weed maintenance for at least three years. Once this small oasis is established, the goal is to intervene as little as possible; let leaves fall where they may, so that seeds and fruit develop new plants. Over time, plant succession will take place, soil will improve, and insect and bird activity will grow. The Miyawaki forest becomes a near-perfect space to enjoy the benefits of trees in places previously without.

There are many examples of Miyawaki forest projects in Washington State. The Spokane Tribal Networks, Food Sovereignty near Wellpinit WA installed a 4,000 square foot Miyawaki Forest. Approximately 1,000 plants were installed in this design, consisting of 40 different species of trees, shrubs, perennials, ground covers and forbs.



<https://dnrtreelink.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/image-5.jpeg>

*Deer fencing and final touches being put on the Miyawaki Forest at the Spokane Tribal Networks, Food Sovereignty school near Wellpinit WA. Photo by Mike Sanborn.*

The web links below include stories and more details about the design/build process and examples from across the world, including Washington State.

<https://www.naturalurbanforests.com/> (<https://www.naturalurbanforests.com/>)

<https://www.sugiproject.com/forests> (<https://www.sugiproject.com/forests>)

<https://www.afforestt.com/about> (<https://www.afforestt.com/about>)

**TAGGED ADVISORY, DIVERSITY, FORESTRY, LEADERSHIP, SUSTAINABILITY, URBAN-FORESTRY, WASHINGTON COMMUNITY FORESTRY COUNCIL**

