Erik weighed in on why the nonprofit was launched.
I grew up watching Captain Planet, and it had an amazing impact on me. My whole life, the scientific community has warned all of us about the threat of climate change, so I decided to try to help fight the proliferation of atmospheric carbon. I read papers and articles for decades until I came up with a simple plan that I believe can help in a big way. That plan is to plant trees. Specifically, we plant indigenous flowering trees. Planting trees native to a region gives them the best chance of survival without additional human maintenance. In this way, we can focus on getting more trees in the ground and not just maintaining what we have done in the past. This allows us to always focus on branching out!

By planting indigenous flowering trees, we clean the air and the soil and help feed pollinators while beautifying our planet. And what’s most exciting is the more trees we plant, the more trees proliferate! Planting one tree today might mean dozens of trees have sprouted in ten years. With a bit of work and a lot of luck, we may just grow a brighter, greener future.

Megan took over for the remainder of the Q&A.

What is the mission of We Plant Trees?
Through education and collective work effort, we counter world trends such as global warming. We work to create a future that considers and incorporates sustainable environmental practices into one’s everyday life. The benefits of these tree plantings will provide a rewarding environment of forest solitude and wildlife support, but perhaps more important is the effort to provide for carbon sequestration, improving our ecosystem. These actions also help support the pollinators so essential to our plants’ fertilization, and subsequently, our sustenance. We will continue increasing the green canopy of our country with the support of our communities!

What is most interesting about trees?
When you think of a tree, you may imagine a strong trunk and the attractive colors of the tree’s leaves high in the canopy. You may hardly ever consider its underground root system. Although often overlooked, it is fascinating to be shared just inches beneath the ground soil. Mycorrhizal fungi are plant fungi that attach to the ends of the tree’s root tips and are key players in making the tree that you see above ground so beautiful. This fungus forms a symbiotic relationship with the tree, essentially elongating the roots and bringing in nutrients and water to the trunk on which the original root system might have otherwise missed out. In return, since fungi cannot photosynthesize, the tree gives carbohydrates to the fungi to energize it, so it continues to explore on behalf of the tree beneath the soil. Pretty cool, right?

How much work is involved after planting?
Enough water should be added around each tree to ensure that the soil is moistened to the depths of the roots. In the heat of summer, this could mean watering a couple of times a week or even every day. In the winter, the soil retains moisture better and should not need nearly as much water. How long do you keep the protective equipment on to protect the tree?
In a heavily deer-populated area, we recommend that the protective tube remain on for at least a year or two. The weed mat is also a great way to reduce competition for growth around the new tree. Trees will have a higher survival rate if they are protected from wildlife during their first few years.

**When is the best time to plant? What seasons? What do you do in other parts of the year?**

The planting season is Fall-Spring and is weather-dependent. We start in October and plant until the ground freezes and begin again once we can dig. In the summer, we don’t plant. We plan for the next season and involve the community as much as possible with events like tree giveaways with our partner organizations, Friends of the Rappahannock and Goose Creek Association.

**Where have you planted trees? How do landowners find you?**

We plant primarily in Fauquier, Loudoun, and Stafford Counties. We Plant Trees partnered with Holly Geary, Executive Director of Goose Creek Association in Middleburg, last summer, which bolstered interest in our mission. How many trees have you planted so far?

To date, through dozens of projects, we have planted over 10,000 trees since our startup in 2019, and we expect to hit 16,000 by the end of our Spring season.

**What kinds of trees do you plant?**

We plant trees indigenous to Virginia. These can include an array of species, such as Eastern White Pine, Willow Oak, Sycamore, Red Maple, Tulip Poplar, Eastern Redbud, Flowering Dogwood, River Birch, American Beech, and more! We try our best to take the landowner’s request into consideration, but we purchase the trees in bulk for other planting projects, so they must be a popular species for everyone’s benefit.

**Do people volunteer to help plant trees?**

Yes! We encourage volunteers. Many hands make light work, or in this case, plant more trees! For example, depending on tree species, one person can plant around 30 trees in one day. With one volunteer, that number doubles, and so on.

**How do you help the pollinators? Please explain? Are you planting flowering trees?**

Yes, we do plant flowering trees such as dogwood, red maple, tulip poplar, plum and apple to attract pollinators. Insect pollinators like honeybees are crucial for the health of our ecosystem!

**How is your 501c3 funded?**

Our nonprofit is run through individual donations. If you would like to support our charity to plant more trees for carbon sequestration, please visit our website, www.weplanttrees.org, for more information. Help us to better the world, one tree at a time!

Learn more about We Plant Trees at www.weplanttrees.org.

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**Globally**

**The Vos Foundation**

The United Nations has identified 17 sustainable development goals to achieve a more sustainable future. Goal 13 addresses climate action. The United Nations reports that the decade from 2010 – 2019 was the warmest recorded, bringing massive wildfires, hurricanes, droughts, floods, and other climate disasters.

David and Patricia Vos from Delaplane have studied climate action from every angle. With a Ph.D. from MIT in Aerospace Dynamics, Estimation, and Controls, David used his analytical mind to dissect the myriad possibilities to combat climate change. His determination was simple: more trees.

Based on David’s deductions, the math is elementary. Human activity puts 37 GigaTons of CO2 into the atmosphere annually. With the current number of trees and plants on earth, 15 GigaTons of this CO2 is removed, leaving 22 GigaTons of CO2 remaining in the atmosphere.

22 GigaTons of CO2 will feed One Trillion Trees … essentially buying time for technology to advance to a point where fewer emissions are released annually.

David and Patricia Vos launched a global foundation, The Vos Foundation, to promote the need to plant billions of trees to restore environmental balance, support imperiled populations, and advance thoughtful advocacy. Through their efforts and partnerships with global entities, their goal is to plant one trillion trees by 2030.

Learn more about this global effort at www.thevosfoundation.org.

This Earth Day, We Meet Trees and The Vos Foundation have one request: plant the seeds (or seedlings) today for a better tomorrow.