

# Trees do more than just look decorative

Trees are beautiful. We all know that. Some have pretty flowers, delicious fruit and nuts. But, trees do much more for us, including some things we do not even realize.

Trees cool the air, filter dust and pollutants, shade us and soothe the savage beast in us. They also provide us with the very oxygen we breathe, and use the carbon dioxide we exhale. While giving us so much, they also increase our property values as they grow.

Each of the benefits listed above has been substantiated by research. Besides the qualitative aspects, many studies from which this information was gleaned also provided quantitative data.

Temperature is one example. Trees moderate temperature in a number of ways. The vast expanses of concrete and asphalt in our urban areas act as giant heat sinks, absorbing masses of heat from the sun.

Areas under trees can be 20° cooler than those in direct sunlight. This translates into comfort under a shade tree. Of equal importance, however, is the dollars and cents saved with this natural air conditioning.

Peak load energy demands can be reduced two to five

times more efficiently by planting trees than by improving appliance and electrical supply efficiency.

Three well-placed trees around a home can cut air conditioning needs by 10-15 percent. Trees also serve as dust catchers, holding particles until rain washes them away.

Many people believed that green plants had a soothing effect on humans, but few knew to what extent until a University of Delaware professor, Dr. Roger Ulrich, conducted a nine-year study of hospital patients. During the study, half the patients had a room with a view of nicely landscaped areas; the other half did not. Patients with a view spent eight percent fewer days in the hospital, required less medication, had fewer post-operative complications and reported a much more positive hospital experience.

As if those benefits are not enough, trees also provide us with economic benefits. A 1986 Gallup poll found that respondents consider trees and landscaping to add an average of 15 percent to the value of residential property.

The members of ASCA, the American Society of Consulting Arborists, remind us that trees

and landscape plants are the only things on a property that appreciate as they grow. Everything else appreciates or depreciates according to the law of supply and demand.

ASCA members should know, too. They are the tree health professionals that property owners, insurance adjusters, lawyers and others call on to value trees in casualty loss, accident, condemnation and other cases in which trees are a party.

Trees represent a renewable resource, but a finite resource. Trees grow slowly, and are not replaced quickly as they die. In America's urban forests, about four trees die or are removed for each new one planted.

Of equal importance to planting new trees, ASCA members stress, is the need for taking care of those we have already. For this, they recommend professional assistance.


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