

Trees, more than an aesthetic investment

Provided by Jeff Miller, founder of Horticulture Management Associates LLC, serves as the Executive Director for the VA Green Industry Council, www.viriniagardening.com. Contributing a diverse background of nursery, greenhouse and landscape experience, Miller challenges all to 'GoGreen'. Contact him at 540-382-0943 or email info@VirginiaGreen.org. Together, let's 'GoGreen'!

Trees – The Natural Answer To Global Warming

Are trees the natural answer to global warming? Research shows that trees are great for the environment! Through cleaning and cooling the air around them, they grow by absorbing carbon dioxide and give off oxygen that we need to breathe.

Plant Trees to Save Energy & Money

HAVE YOU HEARD the phrase, 'money doesn't grow on trees?' "Well, it can and it does," says Lin Diacont, President of the Virginia Green Industry Council, "besides beautifying our homes and communities, trees are natural air conditioners and energy savers! Simply by following a few basic tree-planting rules, you can save energy and money on utility bills." For example, an acre of young trees annually produces enough oxygen to keep 18 people alive and at the same time, absorbs the amount of carbon dioxide produced by driving a car 26,000 miles! Studies conducted by research universities have documented air-conditioning energy saving as much as 50 percent or more by shading the windows and walls of your home. For, tree leaves not only block the sun's rays but give off moisture that cools the air in a process called evapotranspiration. Trees similarly make efficient sound barriers from traffic and factories. Each 100 foot width of trees absorbs about 6-8 decibels of sound intensity. This reduction would be welcomed to residents along a busy highway, which can generate as much as 72 decibels. So, the next time you plant a tree for its aesthetic appeal, be aware that by following a few guidelines, you will not only beautify your yard but improve air quality, lower energy bills and reduce unwelcome noise.

Plant the Best Tree in the Best Place

DECIDUOUS TREES, which are covered with leaves in the summer, shade your home to reduce the need for air-conditioning. In the winter, because they lose their leaves, let the sun shine through and help warm your home. To be their most effective, deciduous trees should be planted on the south and west sides of your home. Another helpful guideline is to place them so that they shade your air-conditioning unit, too. This can reduce the workload on your air-conditioning system and again save money on utility bills.

CONIFEROUS TREES, often called "evergreen" trees, do not lose their leaves in the winter. Evergreen trees planted on the north and west sides of your home help block cold winter winds. This "windbreak" eases the load on home heating systems. That means you can save energy and money providing 3-4% savings in heating costs.

When planting either deciduous or conifer trees, remember to locate them the proper distance from your home, and to avoid planting under power lines. Your nursery/garden center's professional Virginia Certified Horticulturist can help you plant trees properly. Go to VGIC's consumer website at www.VirginiaGardening.com for additional planting information, or to look up a Virginia Certified Horticulturist, Certified Arborist or Certified Landscape Designer in your area.

And, a final planting guideline is call Miss Utility 1-800-552-7001 or 811 before you dig. Miss Utility marks any underground utility lines on your property that you should avoid.

PLANT A TREE and start saving energy today!

A Word about Quality Plants

When selecting a tree, PLANT A QUALITY TREE. Quality trees, grown to established nursery standards, are more resistant to disease and pests, and will provide the best return on your investment.

Remember, cheaply priced or poor quality trees that die quickly become a disappointing mistake - no matter what price you paid for them. The Virginia Certified Horticulturist professionals at your local nursery/garden center can help you select a quality tree that is right for your needs, as well as grown to industry standards, as established by the American Nursery and Landscape Association and sanctioned by the American National Standards Institute. Certified professionals are trained to share your interest in improving the environment with plants that are healthy, attractive, and functional.

Be aware that the size of the plant has a direct relationship to the environmental benefits it provides. In general, the larger a tree, the more immediate positive effect occurs. This is why experts recommend using two inch caliper (trunk diameter) or larger, high-quality trees which are suitable for the landscape. Another reason to select larger trees is that, planted and maintained properly, they tend to survive and thrive much better than seedlings. With proper site selection and preparation, a well-chosen, properly installed and maintained plant will clean air, absorb noise, save energy, and provide beauty for our children and grandchildren. In other words, make a sustainable contribution to the environment, providing for both the present and future.

Virginia Arbor Day and National Arbor Day are Friday, April 25, 2008. Each year the Governor issues a proclamation designating this date as the official Virginia Arbor Day encouraging Virginians to pause and recognize the benefits of trees and to plant a tree for future generations to enjoy. Trees are an investment with long-term benefits, so make a sustainable contribution - plant a tree now for future generations!

Tree Facts: Sustainable Green - Trees

TREES use their hairy leaf surfaces to trap and filter out ash, dust, and pollen particles carried in the air.

TREES lower air temperatures by enlisting the sun's energy to evaporate water in the leaves.

TREES increase humidity in dry climates by releasing moisture as a by-product of food-making and evaporation.

TREES slow down forceful winds.

TREES cut noise pollution by acting as sound barriers.

TREES provide shelter and food for birds and wildlife.

TREES shade us from direct sunlight better than any hat. They are welcome in parking lots on hot, sunny days!

TREES camouflage harsh scenery and unsightly dumps, auto graveyards, and mine sites.

TREE leaves break the onslaught of pelting raindrops on the soil surface and give the soil a chance to soak up as much water as possible.

TREE leaves, when fallen, cover the ground to keep the soil from drying out.

TREE leaves, by decaying, replace minerals in the soil and enrich it to support later plant growth – the original recycler.

TREE roots help hold the soil and keep silt from washing into streams.

TREES save the psyche with pleasing shapes and pattern, fragrant blossoms, and seasonal splashes of color.

TREES break the monotony of endless sidewalks and miles of highways.

TREES beautify our gardens and grace our backyards.

TREES soften the outline of the masonry, metal, and glass cityscape.

TREES increase the value of property.



Background information for this article was provided by the American Nursery & Landscape Association, the Virginia Nursery & Landscape Association, the National Arbor Day Foundation and Jeff Miller, Virginia Certified Horticulturist and Executive Director of the Virginia Green Industry Council.

The Virginia Green Industry Council is the voice of the horticulture industry in the Commonwealth and is dedicated to enhancing the beauty of the state's environment, the well-being of our citizens, improving our state's economy, and improving the health and wellness for everyone in Virginia. The Council is made up of providers and consumers of horticultural products and services. The Council works to provide public and industry education, environmental guidelines and other information that will keep Virginia green and growing. For more information, visit www.viriniagreen.org ; 540-382-0943; FAX: 540-382-2716; info@viriniagreen.org