

STREET SMART™ TREES



PART 2

OF THIS SERIES SHOWS HOW TREES CAN BENEFIT OUR NEIGHBORHOODS AND COMMUNITIES.



Healthy (GREEN) Communities

Trees can be used to increase the overall community health, increase community pride, boost the local economy, and improve water quality. Trees and plants have great community and neighborhood benefits because they help to reduce social hazards of isolation, loneliness, and lack of community ties. Trees improve the health of a community, which as the old adage has it "is wealth".



JUST WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED -

A TREE A DAY KEEPS THE DOCTOR AWAY

Planting shade trees around community sports fields or other recreational areas beautifies the chain link fences, white washed dug-outs, and rusting bike racks but also cools participants and spectators, blocks wind, reduces dust (which can contain lead) in the air, and reduces risks of skin cancer by blocking UV rays of the sun.

Naturalized areas also provide members of the community with places for walking, biking, and other outdoor activities, promoting good health with safe and green spaces to exercise.

TREE-CHERS - SERVE THE YOUNG MIND

Trees and gardens around schools are valuable tools that provide hands-on learning activities for children. In the past, nature was an important part of a child's life and development. Many of us may remember as a child climbing trees, helping plant and care for a garden, exploring in the woods, or field trips to nature areas. Now, many children are increasingly isolated from plants and the natural world, and miss out on the chance to learn from plants.

Working with plants provides a child with an opportunity to take responsibility for a living thing, and see what it takes to make it grow and survive. Studies have shown that children who participate in plant related activities work better in a group, have better appreciation for the environment, and have improved interpersonal relationships.



EROSION: Land being developed can lose 25,000-50,000 tons of soil per square mile. Forested land can lose 50 tons of soil per square mile.



TREES HELP THE OLDER RESIDENT

Plants are also valuable to older members of the community. Studies have shown that older people living in housing with shared outdoor green spaces had better interactions with neighbors compared to those with only paved areas. Bringing people out of their dwellings on hot days in the summer reduces the chance of heat stress inside.

Plants also provide hope for an aging individual with the anticipation of leaves, flowers, fruit, or visits from wildlife. Plant related activities provide a sense of achievement, stimulating the senses and triggering positive memories for many older individuals.

TREES REDUCE ROAD RAGE

For everyone in a community, plants provide peripheral benefits such as reducing speeding and road rage. Well-designed street plantings can manage traffic by reducing speed and reducing accidents. The appearance of the roadside also has a psychological effect on drivers, and an attractive green street can reduce stress and responses to stress, helping people cope safely with stressful driving situations.



TREES AS CIVIL SERVANTS

Studies by the University of Illinois found that the more accessible green areas are in a neighborhood, the more they were used, and the more people had a chance to interact with other members of the community. People living near green areas had more social activities, know more of their neighbors, and have feelings of belonging. Stronger social ties make healthy and happy communities reducing the incidence of domestic and random violence.

TREE PLANTING BUILDS PRIDE IN A COMMUNITY

Trees and green spaces can add to the Community Image by providing not only beauty and color, but also a sense of place that people can identify with and a place where they belong.

Community involvement in planting programs can enhance feelings of ownership and pride, and create positive support needed for keeping programs in the budget. In studies, people involved in community greening activities showed more neighborhood unity, and less social discrimination. For many communities, trees are a part of their history and identity: as landmarks, centers of festivals and events, and places where people come together.

TREES BRING DOLLARS TO A COMMUNITY

Studies have found that people want "Nature-Based" recreational areas in their communities, and 82% of possible users will pay for them. Revenues from these areas for the community can be up to 25 times more than costs.

Many communities have events such as art or music in a garden, or festivals celebrating a season or a type of plant, drawing people and dollars into the community.

A well-maintain urban forest greatly increases the local property values and curb appeal of existing homes and businesses. Realtors often advise landscaping of homes to decrease the time the property is on the market after listing. The longer property is on the market the less chance it will sell at its list price.



TREES CLEAN THE COMMUNITY WATER SUPPLY

Many communities have found that it is cheaper over time to let nature do its job. It is more economical to replant and restore nature than levying taxes for filtration and water treatment facilities. When Trees are used as stormwater management, the rate and volume of stormwater runoff is reduced. Raw sewage spillover can also be reduced. Trees that manage stormwater also reduce soil erosion, and reduce pollution from soil erosion and water runoff. This means cleaner water supplies to our communities, and less contamination and cleanup of local watersheds.