



Center for Urban Forest Research

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COMMUNITY TREES ADD VALUE AND ARE COST-EFFECTIVE ACCORDING TO NEW RESEARCH

DAVIS, CA, May 28, 2003. A large 40 year-old tree pays back tax payers and homeowners nearly \$60 per year according to new research unveiled by the Center for Urban Forest Research for the cold and snowy climate region. For a community with 10,000 trees, that benefit is almost \$600,000 per year. The larger the tree the greater the environmental benefits for communities.

According to Dr. Greg McPherson, Center Director, "a 40 year old green ash tree on public property, annually intercepts over 2143 gallons of stormwater, removes 2.5 lbs of air pollutants, conserves 7 % of energy bills for cooling, and adds 1% to the resale value of a home. Costs for the same large tree are considerably less than the total benefits, ranging from \$8 for a yard tree to \$18 for a street or park tree. So the benefit/cost ratio for a community is as high as 7.9 to 1, and well worth the investment."

Strategically planted trees conserve energy, reduce stormwater runoff, improve local air quality, enhance community attractiveness and investment, increase property value, and even promote human health and well-being. According to Dr. McPherson, "It all depends on where the tree is placed and the amount of leaf surface area. The

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bigger the tree the more leaf surface area is exposed to the environment, and the greater the benefits to communities. But it must be located properly to maximize its effectiveness.”

Rainfall interception is the biggest benefit, paying back to a community over \$23 for every large tree 40 years after planting. Property value enhancement is valued at nearly \$15 per tree, air pollution reduction at \$13, and energy conservation for heating and cooling at nearly \$8.

The new research is packaged in the Center’s latest tree guide – *Northern Mountain and Prairie Tree Guide: Benefits, Costs and Strategic Planting*. The guide was designed for the “cold and snowy” climate region and is the fifth in a series of tree guides for the Western United States. The region extends from Alaska, Western Washington and Oregon, and Northern California on the west, through Idaho and Montana, to the Dakotas and Nebraska on the east. The region extends south through Wyoming, Nevada, Utah and Colorado, to the mountainous areas in New Mexico, Arizona, and Southern California. Future guides are planned for the San Francisco Bay Area and the “desert southwest” climate region. The Inland Empire, South Coast, and San Joaquin Valley climate regions of California, and the Rainy Northwest climate region of Western Washington and Oregon have already been completed.

The purpose of the Tree Guide is to identify and describe the benefits and costs of planting trees in the cold and snowy climate region by providing a tool for community officials and tree managers to increase public awareness and support for tree programs. The Tree Guide answers a number of questions about the environmental and aesthetic

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benefits community trees provide:

- What is their potential to improve environmental quality, conserve energy, and add value to communities?
- Where should residential and public trees be placed to maximize their cost-effectiveness?
- Which tree species will minimize conflicts with powerlines, sidewalks, and buildings?

Answers to these questions will assist policy makers, urban forest managers, non-profit organizations, design and planning professionals, utility personnel, and concerned citizens who are planting and managing trees to improve their local environments and build better communities.

“As communities continue to grow during the next decade, sustaining healthy community forests becomes integral to the quality of life residents expect,” Dr. McPherson said. “The role of urban forests to enhance the environment, increase community attractiveness and livability, and foster civic pride is taking on greater significance as communities strive to balance economic growth with environmental quality and social well-being. The simple act of planting trees provides opportunities to connect residents with nature and with each other. Neighborhood tree plantings and stewardship projects stimulate investment by local citizens, business, and government in the betterment of their communities.”

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