**Yard Trees**

**2024**

**Overview**

Yard trees offer a variety of benefits to homeowners. These benefits include reduced energy costs and increased home value, among others.

**What is a Yard Tree**

* For the purposes of this document, a “yard tree” is referring to a **tree or similar woody plant grown on small-scale residential lots**.

**Getting Started with Yard Trees**

* **Step 1**: Check your local codes.
  + Before doing anything, **check local codes** to see what rules are in place regarding planting trees. Although a permit is not usually required, some cities use stricter regulations or zoning rules that need an application before planting (Plant Native).
* **Step 2**: Selecting a tree.
  + **Native trees offer a wide variety of benefits** over non-native or invasive species (see Native Trees sheet for more information).
  + Native trees also have the **potential to require less maintenance** over time while promoting other native wildlife in the area (Tree of Life Nursery).
  + There are many **resources available** to find out what plants are native to an area, as well as how to care for them. These resources include the [Native Plant Finder](https://nativeplantfinder.nwf.org/Plants) from the National Wildlife Foundation and the [Native Plants Database](https://www.audubon.org/native-plants/search?zipcode=32210&tab=best-results) from the National Audubon Society.
  + The [Arbor Day Foundation](https://www.arborday.org/trees/index-choosing.cfm) also provides a tool to **select trees that will be resilient** within a certain climate zone.
* **Step 3**: Planting.
  + Location is important when planting a yard tree, with location requirements varying from species to species. Important elements to consider are:
    - Sunlight: **Most trees that produce fruit and nuts need between 6-8 hours of direct sunlight each day**, while non-flowering trees can tolerate reduced light exposure (Grow Organic).
    - Soil Quality: **Well-draining soil is usually preferable** when planting a tree, with trees in waterlogged areas being less likely to survive. Plant health can also be affected by soil pH, which can be tested with at-home kits (Grow Organic).
    - Air Circulation: Trees generally **grow better when they have room away from solid masses** like walls or fences that obstruct air flow (Grow Organic).
    - Spacing: Similar to air circulation, **if the tree is too close to other objects** or plants, **it’s growth can be obstructed** (Grow Organic).
  + If the tree has already developed a root system, it is important that it is planted into a hole that is around **twice as wide as the spread-out roots**. The depth of the hole should **place the base of the trunk level with the top of the soil** (Grow Organic).
* **Step 4**: Continued Care.
  + Trees had a wide variety of needs regarding continued care. While some can be left to survive off of rain and sunlight, others may **require further maintenance with pruning**, fertilizing, and so on. The Tree Guide from the Arbor Day Foundation can provide a breakdown of what a tree species needs in both planting and maintenance.

**Benefits of Yard Trees**

* Trees can have a **substantial impact on property value**. It is estimated that trees produce around $31.5 billion a year on home value across the United States (University of Nebraska-Lincoln).
* Trees near homes can **reduce air conditioning needs by %30 and save up to %50 in energy costs** used for heating (Arbor Day Foundation).
* Roadside trees can **reduce indoor pollution of nearby homes by up to %50** (Arbor Day Foundation).

**Case Studies**

[**The Economic Footprint and Quality-of-Life Benefits of Urban Forestry in the United States: United States**](https://www.arborday.org/urban-forestry-economic/downloads/key-findings.pdf)

* Urban trees contributed to an estimated $31.5 billion of home value nationwide. These trees provided an estimated $73 billion in environmental benefits such as reduced air pollution and reduced stormwater runoff.

[**Urban Forest Case Studies: Sacramento, California**](https://www.americanforests.org/article/the-energy-savings-of-trees/#:~:text=According%20to%20research%2C%20just%20three%20large%20trees%20planted,in%20the%20winter%20by%20two%20to%20eight%20percent)

* The Sacramento Municipal Utility District found that three large trees, positioned with two on the west and one on the east of a home, can reduce energy costs by around %30 percent in the summer. These same trees can also reduce heating by an estimated two to %2-8 in the winter.

**Resources**

**Websites**

* Native Plant Finder (National Wildlife Foundation) : <https://nativeplantfinder.nwf.org/Plants>
* Native Plant Database (National Audubon Society): <https://www.audubon.org/native-plants/search?zipcode=32210&tab=best-results>
* Choosing the Right Tree (Arbor Day Foundation): <https://www.arborday.org/trees/index-choosing.cfm>
* Tree Facts (Arbor Day Foundation): <https://www.arborday.org/trees/treefacts/>

**How To’s**

* Planting Bare Root Trees for Beginners (Grow Organic): [https://www.groworganic.com/blogs/articles/planting-bare-root-trees-for-beginners-a-comprehensive-guide](https://www.groworganic.com/blogs/articles/planting-bare-root-trees-for-beginners-a-comprehensive-guideTitle)
* The Tree Guide (Arbor Day Foundation): <https://www.arborday.org/trees/treeguide/>

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University of Nebraska-Lincoln, United States Department of Agriculture, United States Forestry Service (2021, October 8). *The Economic Footprint and Quality-of-Life Benefits of Urban Forestry in the United States*. Arbor Day. <https://www.arborday.org/urban-forestry-economic/downloads/key-findings.pdf>

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