Florida’s Arbor Day and tree give-a-way

Today is Florida’s Arbor Day. Arbor Day was started in Nebraska on April 10, 1872 as a tree-planting day. Now is a good time to plant trees and to recognize the many benefits trees provide to our landscapes and communities.

Each state recognizes Arbor Day based on the best planting time for trees. Florida’s Arbor Day is the third Friday in January. National Arbor Day is celebrated the fourth Friday in April. Planting trees now allows young trees to become established before hot spring weather arrives.

University of Florida economist John Reynolds, using population projections and data from aerial photography and satellite imagery, estimates that from 2000 to 2020, 130,000 acres per year will be converted from rural to urban uses in Florida. Realizing the value or benefits of trees is the first step to keeping trees as part of our landscapes and communities as this development happens.

Trees and wooded areas provide economic, social and environmental benefits. A few of these benefits are mentioned below.

Trees provide economic benefits. In Florida, properly placed trees around buildings can result in forty percent less cooling energy than a treeless site. Shade is only part of the reason this is true. As trees release water through their leaves (called transpiration), air around the plant is cooled as much as nine degrees Fahrenheit. This can result in money saved on cooling your home during Florida’s hot summers. Deciduous trees have a cooling effect during summer when they are full of leaves but allow the warming effect of the sun to shine through during winter because their leaves are gone.

Studies have shown that homebuyers are willing to pay more for homes with trees. Trees increase appraisal and sale price. This generates higher property and transaction tax revenues. Property taxes provide government with revenue to fund public services.

Trees provide health benefits. Research has shown that a walk in wooded areas can relieve psychological and emotional stress. Medical studies reveal that patients recover faster in facilities surrounded with trees and rooms offering views of wooded areas.

Trees provide environmental benefits. The USDA Forest Service reports that a healthy tree holds about thirteen pounds of carbon annually. This reduces the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. According to studies by the USDA, wooded areas reduce runoff by five to thirty five percent. This helps reduce flooding, erosion and acts as a filter to improve water quality.

An Arbor Day tree give-a-way will take place in the parking lot of the Crestview Wal-Mart on January 27, 9:00 a.m. and will continue until the trees are gone. Bare-root seedlings of Shumard oak, redbud, dogwood, crabapple and other tree species will be given away. The tree give-a-way is sponsored by the Florida Department of Agriculture.
and Consumer Services (FDACS) Division of Forestry, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Yellow River Soil and Water Conservation District. Okaloosa County Master Gardeners will assist in giving out the trees and answering questions.

For additional information on trees for North Florida, visit the Websites listed below or contact the University of Florida Extension Office or the FDACS Division of Forestry Office in your area.

http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/TOPIC_Trees
http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/woody/planting/index.htm

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