

## TREES HELP KEEP US ALIVE AND MAKE GOOD NEIGHBORS

Marilyn Hawkey – published 7/1/20 in The Connection

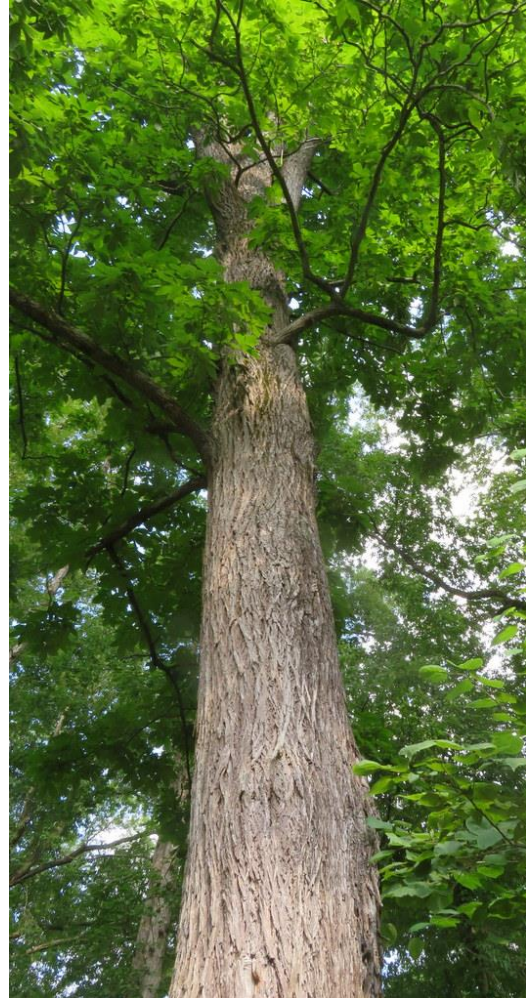


Urban and community forestry are new terms in our verbal landscape. The Society of American Foresters' *Forestry Handbook* defines urban forestry as "the management of publicly and privately owned lands in and adjacent to urban areas." Its goals include identification of treasured trees and placement of new trees in communities and educating people about the importance of trees. While everyone doesn't live in a city, we all live in a community. A community is comprised of residents, businesses, and social and government services, and each community has its point-of-view about trees. Managing the trees in our community is "community forestry," where trees are managed on an individual basis.

Most of us were born elsewhere and chose to come to East Tennessee for a less expensive cost of living, peace and quiet, pristine water, clean air, clean and safe places to recreate, and to be close to nature and our national and state parks and forests – all of these desires involve trees and forests. Research has shown trees have an aesthetic value to our health because our awareness of them can lower stress levels, which in turn can decrease elevated heart rates and help us be calmer. But there is more. Trees also have a serious financial impact on our pocketbooks.

The National Tree Benefit Calculator ([www.treebenefits.com/calculator](http://www.treebenefits.com/calculator)) is the brainchild of Casey Trees and Davey Tree Expert Co. The calculator allows you to calculate the financial value of a tree. For example, one 20" Eastern White Pine provides overall benefits of \$112 per year as follows: \$42.42 as a stormwater interceptor; \$40.31 in property values; \$10.09 in electricity; \$9.78 in air quality; \$5.10 in natural gas; and \$4.20 in CO2

reduced emissions. A tree can absorb as-much-as 48 pounds of CO2 each year. They hold carbon and release oxygen through photosynthesis. It is estimated that yearly, US forests (trees) absorb about 10% of our country's CO2 emissions.





Trees uptake fertilizer nutrients (N/P/K or nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium) that otherwise could be washed into the lake as pollutants. Trees consume gallons of rainwater which they discharge into the air as oxygen and water vapor. Trees lower air temperature by evaporating



water in their leaves. Think about it: planting trees and shrubs can save you money on your energy bill because they provide shade to your home in the summer and shield your home as windbreakers in the winter.

Treeless land opens the door to soil erosion. After a heavy rain, many people observe and then complain about the lake turning brown. That color is due to soil in the increased volume of stormwater running off property due to loss of both the tree leaf canopy and tree roots to hold onto it. Cutting trees off residential and

commercial lots is a major cause of soil erosion and also contributes to increased pollution of the lake by allowing chemical pollutants to wash into it. These chemicals stimulate the growth of algae and unwanted shoreline vegetation and have the potential to decrease your home's property value.



Trees around our homes and businesses have tremendous value. And yet, what is the first thing many of us do when building a new home? We let our contractor clear-cut our lot to make it easier to build. That's a major mistake. If you are planning to build, make sure your builder knows the trees he is not to cut. Look into adding trees for shade, rainwater retention, and reduced stormwater runoff. However, trees grow slowly, so save as many large trees as possible. Do select them carefully, considering views and privacy concerns, and then protect them. Determine and mark the construction equipment pathway because equipment running back and forth over a tree's roots will compact the soil and, in a year or two, that "to-be-saved" tree will die.

If your lot was cleared by previous homeowners, you can fix the problem. You can plant trees and shrubs and renew the beauty, the natural breathing/exhaling cycle and the soil maintenance of trees while you save money on household operating expenses.

Our community can discuss and work for compromise to set priorities between our need for a clean and healthy environment, building contractor's needs and our preferences for lake and mountain views and privacy. The "bottom line" is that by saving many existing trees, we create the environment we want, we save money on home operating expenses, we improve the water quality of the lake and we add to and maintain our home property values.

To learn more, visit WATeR's web site at [www.Tellicowater.org](http://www.Tellicowater.org). WATeR is an all-volunteer not-for-profit organization. Contact us at [Tellicowater@aol.com](mailto:Tellicowater@aol.com). Become a member and sustain WATeR's effort to protect and improve the quality of water in the Tellico Reservoir and Watershed.