

Sittin under the ol' shade tree!

by Neil A. Dick

Living in Shaker Heights provides a great opportunity to sit under many large and beautiful shade trees – at least during the summer! But our urban forest provides a myriad of benefits beyond this simple pleasure. Here are some other ways our wonderful trees benefit us:

Take a deep breath--Trees purify and enhance the quality of our air:

- One average tree produces approximately 260 lbs of oxygen per year.
- One acre of trees produces the amount of oxygen consumed by 18 people, and removes 26 tons of carbon dioxide each year.
- Trees remove pollutants such as ozone, nitrogen dioxide, and particulates from the air.

Be cool--Trees provide cooling comfort:

- Trees lower ambient air temperature by both evaporating water from their leaves and providing shade. They can make buildings 20 degrees cooler in summer and can reduce the need for air conditioning by 50%. A hard surface under a tree can be 35 degrees cooler than if it were in full sun.
- By shading rooftops and pavements, mature trees can cool entire neighborhoods and cities by as much as 10%.

Take a sip of water--Trees benefit our water quality:

- Their leaves catch and hold onto rainwater, keeping it from our overwhelmed sewage system. A 10- inch diameter tree can intercept 722 gallons of rainwater per year.
- Tree roots stabilize soil and prevent erosion into our waters.
- Trees improve ground water quality by filtering out harmful chemicals and toxins in our soils.

Listen to the chirp of birds--Trees provide needs for wildlife, which are struggling to survive in our increasingly urbanized landscape.

- They provide habitat and food for wildlife.
- Bird diversity is lowest in areas of mowed lawns, and highest in areas of diverse species of large trees and brush.

Be healthy and prosperous--Trees have proven health and community benefits:

- They provide protection from UV light which is harmful not only to people but also things like blacktop.
- They provide noise reduction and privacy, reduce stress and fatigue.

- Children exposed to nature have reduced symptoms of attention deficit disorders, and less discipline problems.
- Trees and landscaping reduce the level of violence, crime, and vehicular speed in neighborhoods.
- Trees increase property values.
- They support neighborhood businesses by attracting shoppers and providing a more positive experience for them.

The City of Shaker Heights has recognized the tremendous value of planting trees, and continues to manage and improve the canopy of trees on public lands. Private landowners play an important part in this effort, and are encouraged to plant the right trees in the right places, to benefit its residents, wildlife, and the world!

See [“The Value of Trees to a Community”](#)