

Ripple Effect #13

Planting Trees for Energy Conservation

Good landscaping practices offer one of the most practical methods of reducing energy consumption in homes. When the homeowner considers the added benefits of increased real estate value and more attractive homes and communities, the investment becomes an even greater bargain. The Minnesota Clay County Soil and Water Conservation District offers the following information on the benefits you will reap from adding trees to your landscape.

Trees and Their Benefits

Trees can reduce summer temperatures significantly. Shading the roof of a house from the afternoon sun by large trees can reduce temperatures inside the home by as much as 8 to 10 degrees F. Deciduous trees (those that lose their leaves in winter) provide summer shade, then drop their leaves in the fall, which allows the warmth of the sun to filter through their bare branches in winter and help warm the home. If a home can be situated to take advantage of shade from existing trees on south and west exposures, energy expended to cool the house can be reduced significantly.

Protection from the Wind

Although living windbreaks have been utilized for many years, their value has increased with the advent of higher fuel costs. Winter winds in our area usually blow from the north or northwest and accelerate the rate of air exchange between a house and the outdoor environment. Savings up to 25 percent have been recorded in comparing completely exposed homes and houses landscaped to minimize air infiltration. Summer winds normally blow from the south and southwest with generally positive effects on human comfort. Tall trees from the south and west can reduce the temperature while allowing breeze to pass beneath and through the foliage canopy.

It's not too early to start thinking about planting trees in the spring of 2007. Trees grow best in soil that has been tilled and kept black the year before planting. Most local soil conservation district offices will help you design your tree plan and suggest trees that will grow best in your soil types. Contact them now and develop your plan to start saving energy and money!

Until the next Ripple Effect,

The Red River Basin Commission (RRBC)

The RRBC is a grassroots organization that is a chartered not-for-profit corporation under the provisions of Manitoba, North Dakota, Minnesota, and South Dakota law. Our offices in Moorhead, MN and Winnipeg, MB can be reached at 218-291-0422 and 204-982-7254, or you can check out our website at www.redriverbasincommission.org.