

# Enjoy Our Trees

From whatever perspective you consider Fairfax County today, it is not the same county it was 30 years ago. Since 1975, a population increase of 50% has made tremendous demands on the environment. Air quality, water quality, invasive species and wildlife conflict



*This Witness Tree served George Washington, and others like him, as a survey point for property boundaries. When Fairfax County was first surveyed trees like the swamp chestnut oaks at Huntley Meadows were used as reference points. Some of these trees still exist throughout the county.*

are words that we use to discuss the environmental effects of over one million people living in a county of

just over 250,000 acres. Over the

past 33 years, people and all

that we bring with us, have

reduced our forest cover by

48%, resulting in the loss of

thousands of individual trees.

The balance between ecological and humanistic values is what

maintains our high quality of life. One of

the simplest things we can do to maintain this balance is to learn to enjoy our trees.

*Not all trees were created equal. Mimosa is an invasive species and causes harm to the environment. It spreads uncontrollably into native habitats and disrupts the ecological balance.*



## Care, Educate, Inspire

Stewardship is about working together to care for the environmental and cultural resources of Fairfax County. People become stewards for different reasons. They may want to help ensure clean water and air. They may wish to share something with their children. They may be inspired by spiritual beliefs. Whatever prompts our commitment, it is easy to take an active role in stewardship. It can be a small and simple thing, or it can be much bigger. Either way, it all adds up to a Fairfax County that looks to its past with pride and to its future with confidence.

You can learn more about Fairfax County Stewardship, the Board of Supervisor's 20-year environmental vision and the Fairfax County Park Authority at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/stewardship](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/stewardship)

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# Fairfax County Stewardship



# Trees



## So Many Trees, So Little Space

Most of our native trees are adapted to our cool wet winters and hot dry summers. This helps most of our native trees thrive in our yards, parks and along roadsides. Choose the right tree, add a little care and you can add tremendous value to your yard. But with all the potential benefits, how do you choose just one? Trees have a preference for sun (usually the taller trees like the **tuliptree**) or shade (usually the short ones like the **paw paw**). Trees have value based on what they provide: **walnuts** provide food for wildlife, but the flowers are not as attractive as the **shadbush**, which provides amazing white blooms. Trees can affect everything from air quality to water: the **birch**, for instance, may use up to 70 gallons of water a day (which is a lot more than average), whereas a **red** or **black oak** is healthier in a dry spot in the landscape. These varying tree characteristics mean that the right tree for you is out there.

## If not you, who? Small things.

- ◆ **Compost** tree leaves and other household waste to protect water quality, increase soil fertility and save energy. Using natural fertilizer, like compost, reduces your need for store-bought mineral fertilizers.

## A Tree Grows in Fairfax

Where do trees grow? Our parks are an awesome spot for trees, but at just over 24,000 acres, existing parkland is not enough to give Fairfax County residents the maximum benefit of trees. When we consider planting trees at schools, houses of worship, “private open space” such as homeowners’ association land, and at single family homes, we open up 100,000 additional acres that are appropriate for more trees.

We need more trees:

- ◆ next to trails
- ◆ next to streams
- ◆ on the southwest sides of buildings (to lower energy usage)
- ◆ to replace trees that are lost during construction

## If not you, who? Big things.

- ◆ **Plant a native tree** in the right place.

- ◆ **Reducing mowing by 20%** can protect air quality.

Lawn mowers are some of the heaviest polluters of air. If you cut back on the yard area you mow—maybe by planting a tree—you can have a significant effect on air quality. Convincing your neighbors to reduce mowing has an even bigger effect.



*The bark of this tree has split and healed, making an odd, face-like growth. Trees can take the place of anything in a child's imagination, from a tree house to waltzing couples at a ball. Squint your eyes and see what your mind comes up with.*

Monique Mullins and Katherine Bryant

## What purpose do trees really serve?

Trees contribute to our quality of life—even just one tree, if it is in the right spot. However, when a tree becomes a bit of a nuisance, the benefits of that tree are sometimes forgotten. From a purely monetary perspective, a home with trees has a higher market value (estimates range up to 10% higher) than a similar home without trees. Judged by the environmental benefits a tree can produce over its lifetime, a tree's value is estimated at about \$50,000.

Trees can also help strike a harmonious balance between the necessities of life (like homes and business) and the quality of life. For instance, a wooded buffer between neighborhoods, offices and streets works to lessen noise and air pollution. An individual tree in the right place can provide shade to you or your house. Trees can define a community, be a source of beauty and inspire your imagination.

Trees also help us achieve an ecological balance. Impervious surface associated with parking lots and buildings can decrease water quality and increase quantity, leading to environmental side-effects like erosion. Trees help re-establish the water cycle while at the same time improving air quality and supplying food and shelter for wildlife. As an added benefit, trees in the right places, especially along streams, soak up excess fertilizer or chemicals that result from yard maintenance.

