

The Health Benefits of Landscape Trees- Reprinted with permission from Arid Zone



“The Tree of Life” has been used by poets, philosophers, writers and artist of all stripes, to metaphorically present the idea of life and death since the time of the earliest human hunter-gather cultures. Trees were likely cultivated around the same time human began growing crops and started living in permanent communities. We all embrace the calm and serenity a walk in a beautiful garden provides and how our surroundings can contribute to feelings of wellbeing.

Scientific evidence on the physical environmental benefits of landscape trees continues to expand. Overwhelming evidence supports the conclusion that trees mitigate the urban heat island, reduce particulate pollution, stabilize soil and reduce runoff and, when properly placed, reduce energy consumption for residential and commercial buildings. The direct benefits to human health are more difficult to measure scientifically but are, none the less, compelling and worthy of consideration. Here are a couple of examples from the scientific literature:

Recent studies in the health field have shown that being in nature reduces stress, relieved symptoms of depression and increases white blood cell counts (these are the cells that help the body fight infection).

- Walking in forests reduces heart rate.
- Women with more trees around their homes were less likely to have underweight babies
- For a planting cost of \$250-600 (includes first 3 years of maintenance) a single street tree returns over \$90,000 of direct benefits (not including aesthetic, social and natural) in the lifetime of the trees.
- A growing body of evidence suggests that the inclusion of trees and other streetscape features in the roadside environment reduces crashes and injuries on urban roadways.
- Trees absorb the first 30% of most rain and snow through their leaf system, allowing evaporation back into the atmosphere, storm water runoff and flooding potential to urban properties is therefore reduced.
- Trees in close proximity to streets absorb 9 times more pollutants than more distant trees.
- Trees have a calming and healing effect of ADHA (hyperactive) adults and teens, reduces road rage on tree lined streets and reduces perceived travel time for commuters.
- When trees are planted along streets and near on-street parking, drivers slow their speed by 7 to 8 mph when compared to tree-less streets.
- Contact with nature — with plants, with animals, with pleasing landscapes, and with wilderness — offers a range of medical benefits including lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels, enhanced survival after a heart attack, more rapid recovery from surgery, fewer minor medical complaints, and lower self-reported stress.
- Research suggests that exercise is more beneficial — leading to enhanced tranquility and more relief of anxiety and depression — when it occurs in natural settings, like parks. The opportunity for so-called "green exercise" is an important asset that city parks offer.
- Studies monitoring longevity of more than 3,000 people born between 1903 and 1918 and living in Tokyo, one of the most densely populated cities in the world, showed that proximity to public parks and tree-lined streets appeared to have the greatest impact on the length of pensioners' lives, even when taking into account factors known to affect longevity, such as gender, marital status, income, and age.
- <https://www.planning.org/cityparks/briefingpapers/physicalactivity.htm>

Consultant of the Month

Butch Colbert, Project Manager at Ovation Development, has been chosen as November's Consultant of the Month.



Butch has been working with us on a number of new apartment developments and has been a great help in many facets of each property. He always makes time to stop by the office or meet on site when needed to discuss the design. It is a pleasure to hear Butch's input on any part of the project, and to work with him to find the correct solutions and approaches needed for a successful project. He is a great part of the team and we thank you, Butch, for your help and dedication to each and every project.

“Gratitude can transform common days into thanksgivings, turn routine jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities into blessings.”
— William Arthur Ward

Favorite Flora:

Agave americana- Century Plant- By Matt Durham



This is the 100th favorite flora article and thought it was only fitting to write about the Century Plant (Agave americana). This evergreen succulent is native to the highlands of Mexico but can be found in cultivated landscapes throughout the world. It has blue green leaves that curl downward ending in a sharp tip. This Agave can reach 5-7 feet in height and can spread 8-12 feet. Like most Agaves, the flower stalk is impressive, growing 15 to 30 feet from the center of the plant. A branching structure at the top of this stalk extends up to 6 feet across and is tipped with yellow flowers. As impressive as the flower stalk is, again like all Agaves, the plant will die once the bloom has finished. While it is not known exactly what triggers the flowering mechanism, most century plants will not bloom until at least 10 years of age.

Agave americana can handle full sun, reflected heat and even does well in partial shade. It is drought tolerant and can survive with minimal supplemental watering. This Agave makes a great accent or specimen in the landscape but should only be used where there is adequate space for growth and not around foot traffic. When selecting an Agave americana, keep in mind there are several varieties including ‘marginata’, ‘medio picta’, ‘striata’, etc. All of these have variations in color, and slight variations in size and form.



Photo of the Month

Flowers
Dallas, Texas
Cassie Grimes