



# University of Minnesota Forestry Information Series

People have their own ways of using trees. To grown-ups, trees may be the key to childhood memories. To children, the trees are an adventure. To landscape architects, trees are a tool for creating different landscape effects. To local foresters, they are a livelihood.

Nearly everyone agrees that trees are important, even crucial. They provide shade, protection from the wind, a place to play for active children, a cool, shaded backrest for dreamy grown-ups or a source of food, fruits, nuts, beauty, building materials and much, much more.

What most people may not realize, or only realize subconsciously, is that trees can be used in many ways for many reasons. The following is a list of ten ways trees can be used:

1. *Reduce soil erosion:* rows of trees break the wind on flatter lands and healthy forests protect soil from water erosion on hillsides.
2. *Improve air and water quality:* the forest floor of leaves, needles, and decaying wood acts as a giant sponge by absorbing, filtering, and holding water. One acre of trees provides enough clean oxygen for seven people and cleans many pollutants from the air.
3. *Increase income:* properly managed trees can provide excellent sources of income through the sale of timber and other wood products, Christmas trees, boughs, and other special forest products.
4. *Save energy:* recent studies show windbreaks can reduce winter fuel consumption by 10 to 30 percent. Trees also save energy by shading – one large tree can have the cooling effect of five air conditioners.
5. *Protect livestock:* trees reduce the wind and can

significantly reduce animal stress by decreasing exposure to wind. Livestock not only need less feed, but their weight gains are higher. Shade provided by trees can help keep animals cooler on hot summer days.

6. *Sound barrier:* trees and windbreaks reduce noise from high-speed traffic and other sounds.

Leaves, branches, and twigs all absorb sounds of different frequencies.

7. *Home for wildlife:* wooded areas make valuable cover, nesting, and breeding areas for upland game and songbirds. In winter, when all other food is blanketed with snow, seeds and fruits of trees and shrubs provide food for many species.

8. *Living snow fence:* in snow country, properly locating a living fence of trees and shrubs parallel to your driveway or highway helps hold snow on the fields and off the roads. Proper distance is critical or it can increase snow on a road.

9. *Improve crop yield:* soil particles blown by strong winds frequently damage small crops (similar to sandblasting). Yields may also be lowered by the drying effects of hot winds. Trees protect against these hazards.

10. *Beautify the countryside:* well kept wooded areas, windbreaks, and other tree plantings undeniably enhance the aesthetic value of individual farms and the countryside.

So, if it has been on your mind to beautify your outdoor surroundings, or you just like the idea of planting trees, go ahead, there are at least ten good reasons for planting and using trees.

**About the Author:**