

Florida's Arbor Day
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Arbor Day has an interesting history. J. Sterling Morton, the champion of Arbor Day, moved to Nebraska in 1854 from the Detroit area. He missed the trees and nature as Nebraska was then a treeless plain. Morton was a journalist and became editor of a newspaper so he had the perfect avenue to influence people. On January 4, 1872, Morton proposed the first Arbor Day to the State Board of Agriculture and the date was set for April 10, 1872. They planted more than one million trees on the first Arbor Day in Nebraska.

Arbor Day is celebrated in all 50 states and the most common date is the last Friday in April. In Florida, the date is the third Friday in January so it was celebrated yesterday, January 16th. Our Arbor Day is timed earlier than most areas in the United States because of our milder climate. Planting now will give our tree roots a head start before the increased water demands kick in with our warm weather.

Trees provide many products that include foods, medicines, building supplies and more. Mulch, railroad ties, camera film, fruit cakes, orange juice, furniture, paper, maple syrup, pencils, baseball bats, crayons, dye, cosmetics, turpentine, sodas, musical instruments, chewing gum, and inks are all products from trees.

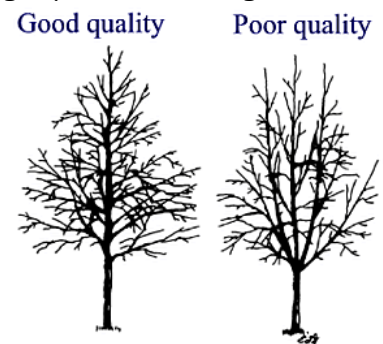
Another not so obvious benefit of trees is that trees and other landscape plantings can save up to 30% in home cooling and heating costs. With rising energy costs, landscaping for energy conservation may regain popularity as it did in the 1970s. Shading the east and west walls of a home with trees and other plant material offer considerable savings in cooling bills. Small trees that range in size from 25' to 30' tall are preferred for shading sidewalls. Spreading, rounded and vase shaped trees provide shade for the longest period of time. Taller maturing trees should be planted further away from the home because of potential safety hazards. In north Florida, it's best to select deciduous trees that shed their leaves so we can benefit from the sun's warmth in the colder months. During the winter, a row of evergreen trees can block cold winds coming from the north, northwest to reduce heating bills.

Another reason to plant trees is because they reduce air pollution. Trees

and other plants remove carbon dioxide from the air and give off oxygen. They also help to absorb and block noise from busy roads.

There are a lot of choices when selecting trees. Some folks choose a tree for their cooling effects and tend to select a large spreading tree like a live oak. Others may prefer a crape myrtle or magnolia tree to add color to the landscape. Maybe a tree for food production is a goal so try growing a grapefruit, orange, pear, pecan, or persimmon tree. If you enjoy watching birds and other wildlife, try planting a yaupon holly, sweetgum, pine, oak, palm, hickory, or hawthorn tree as an easy food source.

Whatever your tree of choice, now is a great time to install new landscape material. Before purchasing a tree, find out where the tree is native to and if the growing requirements match your site. Also look at the mature size to make sure it will not outgrow the space. In the nursery, check the tree to make sure it's free of injury along the trunk, is not root bound, and doesn't have girdling roots around the trunk base.



For planting information, go to <http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/woody/documents/EP314.pdf>.