



TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE

Benefits of Trees:

Social

Trees are often one of a community's most cherished components. They are an important part of community infrastructure working non-stop for our personal, economic and environmental health. Trees make communities livable, enriching our cities with a better quality of life, a better business climate, and an enhanced sense of place. They create lasting impressions on how a community is perceived by visitors and can establish and promote community pride. People walk and jog more on streets with trees; children and adults have a cool place to play or relax in the summer, thus increasing their interaction with neighbors and creating more of a sense of community. Tree plantings provide an opportunity for community involvement and empowerment that improves the quality of life in our neighborhoods.

People derive substantial pleasure from trees. From healthier babies to less violence, vandalism, and littering, trees and associated landscapes provide a host of positive impacts, not only economically, but also socially and physically. Research has shown that even just views of trees and nature help reduce stress in both mind and body and have a positive effect on the human immune system. In addition, there is a direct correlation between the amount of trees and greenspace in community and the use of those common spaces by residents. These areas become places for neighbors to meet, get to know each other, form social bonds and develop life-long habits of healthful living.



Some of the many social and health benefits of trees:

- Trees provide opportunity for physical fitness. Urban forests of tree-lined sidewalks, parks, and open spaces have become increasingly popular as places to walk, run, bike, and hike.
- Neighborhoods with mature street trees tend to have more social interaction between neighbors than comparable neighborhoods without trees.
- Less violence occurs in urban public housing where there are trees. Researchers, Sullivan and Kuo (1996), suggest that trees afford a place for neighbors to meet and get to know each other. Their research showed that friendships develop into a network of support.
- Trees have been shown to increase concentration in children. And girls who are exposed to nature or live in greener communities tend to exhibit higher levels of self-discipline and decreases in impulsive, risky behavior.
- Closely-spaced trees along roads tend to slow traffic by giving the impression of narrow roads and speed as they zoom past your windows. They also serve as a buffer zone between streets and sidewalks, creating safer environments for joggers, pedestrians and children at play.
- Workers with views of trees and nature from their desks experience less sick time and report greater job satisfaction.
- Hospital patients that see trees need less medication and have faster recovery times following surgery compared to patients without views of trees.
- Trees are shown to have a calming effect on people; people suffering from high stress tend to feel calmer in the presence of trees, thus improving overall health and well-being.
- Because of their long life and stately appearance, trees are often planted as living tributes or memorials to loved ones or to honor a specific event.



Stephen F. Austin tribute tree planted at his death site *Photo: Mickey Merritt*