



By KAREN GARDNER

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Earth Day inspires people to plant trees. Frederick schools, parks, community organizations and private citizens will plant hundreds of them this month.

There's a reason environmentalists are called tree-huggers. But planting a tree is not always a political statement; it's a healthy thing to do, for humans and the Earth.

The Center for Watershed Protection, in Ellicott City, has run ads in the Frederick area suggesting people plant a tree for clean drinking water, shade and carbon consumption.

This year is also the International Year of Forests, as declared by the United Nations. According to the U.N., forests cover 31 percent of total land area.

One large shade tree costs an average of \$200, but can save much more, according to Karen Capiella, director of research. "The tree can reduce the amount of rainfall that runs off," she said.

Rainwater runoff affects water quality by increasing erosion and pouring pollutants into our water supply. "It can be difficult to quantify this, because there are so many variables," Capiella said. The type of soil, the kind of tree, and the type of land all affect the amount of runoff.

Then there's shade, which cuts down on the need for air conditioning, and the ability of trees to take in carbon dioxide, which contributes to the buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

"There's a wide range of research on the tangible benefits of trees," Capiella said. Just seeing a tree from a hospital bed is shown to speed healing, according to the Center for Urban Horticulture at the University of Washington.

Trees contribute to an increase in property value and reduce stress, according to a report by the center.

"Studies on commercial districts or business districts with trees show people spend more time and money than in business districts without trees," Capiella said.

"There's even a study that shows having plants in your office makes people happier at work," she said.

The Marylanders Plant Trees program is a good way to get started, she said. The program's website offers \$25 coupons at participating nurseries.

The program started in 2009, and so far, 54,000 trees have been planted. Of those trees, nearly 10,000 have been planted in Frederick County. That's considerably more than in any of the neighboring counties, including Montgomery and Howard coun-



Staff photo by Adam Fried

Joseph Hartung, 9, helps Joe Richardson, owner of Bar-T Mountainside in Urbana, plant a sycamore tree Saturday during the facility's Earth Day celebration.

ties, both of which have much larger populations. The program is hoping to have 50,000 more trees planted across the state by the end of 2012.

Added to that is the state Forest Brigade, which hopes to have 1 million new trees planted on state-owned land by the end of next year.

Marylanders Plant Trees has a list of recommended trees, ranging from the flowering dogwood to the huge, spreading white oak that work well in

Maryland's climate and provide food and shelter for birds and other wildlife.

Green infrastructure is a new buzzword in urban planning. Along with buildings, roads and cultural features, cities and people benefit from the presence of natural features. Many cities are promoting green infrastructure as a benefit to residents and businesses.

One day, tree-hugging may no longer be associated with politics. It may become a way of life.



Staff photo by Adam Fried

Joe Richardson, owner of Bar-T Mountainside in Urbana, teaches Paul Potter, 11, left, and Joseph Hartung, 9, proper tree-planting tips during the facility's Earth Day celebration Saturday.

LEFT: Richardson pulls back mulch while planting a sycamore tree.