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TREES BRING LONG-LASTING, OFTEN UNEXPECTED, BENEFITS

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As fall fades into winter, the time becomes perfect for tree planting. North Carolina Cooperative Extension's Master Gardeners are planting Trees of Strength to remember those who died Sept. 11 and to honor those who protect and defend the country. You can join them by planting a tree in your yard. Over the years, your investment will be returned in ways you might not expect.

By planting and caring for trees, you can help reduce pollution, lower energy costs, improve your community's appearance and increase the value of your property. Trees also can sooth and relax us and help us connect to nature and our surroundings.

Here are just a few of the benefits that trees provide:

- ◆ Deciduous trees block sunlight in the summer but allow sunlight to reach and warm your home in the winter. For the most benefit, plant deciduous trees on your home's south and west sides.
- ◆ A tree's shade can improve your heat pump's efficiency.
- ◆ Evergreen trees can cut wind speed and, thus, reduce winter heat loss from your home.
- ◆ A well-placed tree can reduce noise. And a belt of trees 100 feet wide and 45 feet high can reduce highway noise by 50 percent.
- ◆ Trees help settle out and trap dust, pollen and smoke. The dust level can be as much as 75 percent lower on a tree's sheltered side than on the windward side.
- ◆ Trees attract birds and other animals by providing food and shelter.
- ◆ Trees absorb carbon dioxide and potentially harmful gasses, such as sulfur dioxide and carbon monoxide, from the air and release oxygen. For every 10,000 miles you drive, it takes seven trees to remove the amount of carbon dioxide produced if your car gets 40 miles per gallon; it will take 10 trees at 30 mpg; 15 trees at 20 mpg; 20 trees at 15 mpg; and 25 trees at 12 mpg.
- ◆ Trees help reduce surface water runoff from storms, thus decreasing soil erosion and the accumulation of sediment in streams.

- ◆ Hospital patients have been shown to recover from surgery more quickly when their hospital rooms offered a view of trees. They also complained less and needed fewer painkillers.
- ◆ Trees can separate and define space thus providing a sense of privacy, solitude and security, and create a feeling of relaxation and well being.
- ◆ Trees can enhance community economic stability by attracting businesses and tourists — people linger and shop longer when trees are present.
- ◆ Apartments and offices in wooded areas rent faster and have higher occupancy rates. And people who work in offices in wooded areas are reportedly more productive and less likely to be absent from work.

Trees also can serve as a living legacy for the next generation, linking us to near and distant generations. That's the idea behind the Trees of Strength campaign: creating a lasting memorial to those who died Sept. 11. To find out more about the campaign, or about tree-planting and care, contact your county North Carolina Cooperative Extension center. Or look on the Web at <http://www.treesofstrength.org/>.