The Urban Forest

By Rob Northrop, Urban and Community Forester

At first the idea of an urban forest seems contradictory. After all most of us view forests as being wild and somewhat remote from the areas in which we live. But get up on a tall building or look out the window of a jet as you approach the Tampa airport and what you most often see are the tops of trees, what foresters refer to as the forest canopy. The city’s built infrastructure such as sidewalks, roads, buildings, sewer and water lines are often shaded by this canopy.

This urban forest canopy shields us from our subtropical summer sun, reducing the intense heat and glare. This canopy cover reduces the likelihood of skin cancer, increases the average life span of paved surfaces (roads, parking lots) improves air quality by removing air pollutants, and conserves precious water by intercepting falling rain and moving water down into aquifers.

As more of us live in urban areas, and these areas spread out into the existing forest and farmland we will see the development of more and more of these ‘urban forests’. Gaining a better understanding of the condition and extent of the urban forest, and the costs and benefits of maintaining the urban forest will be critical in our attempts to manage the trees in a way to yield a continuous flow of benefits.

Out On a Limb focuses on the Urban Forest, and what we, as homeowners and neighbors, need to know about tree care, to help sustain this valuable resource.

So, What Do You Think About Tampa Bay’s Urban Forest?

By Francisco J Escobedo PhD

Studies from other parts of the US have shown that trees can purify the air and water, and provide shade that can assist in reducing energy use costs and temperatures. Urban forests can even have a role in global warming, human well-being, and the economic vitality of cities. Trees, however, require a commitment of public expenditure; they can on occasion damage sidewalks and produce litter. Certain trees can even increase allergies in some people and with the Florida’s recent hurricane activity some trees can even damage homes.

Unfortunately, most of the information on the benefits and costs of urban forests has, up to now, been mostly from other parts of the country.

In the near future you will be receiving a survey from the University of Florida with a series of questions concerning your urban forest resource and what you think about it. Please take the time to fill it out and return to us.

Your cooperation will assist us in finding out how Florida’s trees, palms, and shrubs can contribute to your individual and communities’ well being.
Trees in Business Districts: Comparing Values of Consumers and Business

By Rob Northrop

Do business people and shoppers share an appreciation for trees? This was one of several questions in a recent national survey about the urban forest in business districts. Despite their costs, trees provide many indirect benefits to businesses and communicate positive messages that can attract visitors and shoppers.

Recent research, conducted by Kathy Wolf, PhD. University of Washington, helps us to better understand the value of trees in a business community. Revitalizing districts were identified in eight cities around the United States. Both business people and nearby residents were asked to complete a survey. The project outcome, based on analysis of responses, helps us to plan and manage urban forests that better meet business needs in Hillsborough County.

Comparing Business and Shoppers
Both business and consumers groups gave higher ratings to scenes with trees. Business owners differed significantly from shopping visitors in their assessment of visual quality. Business people consistently rated landscaped scenes lower than shoppers, suggesting that merchants have less appreciation for trees than the people they wish to welcome to their shops.

In other studies undertaken by Dr. Wolf consumers expressed a willingness to pay up to 12% more for the same goods and services if the stores were located in attractive urban forest settings. This same study indicated a willingness by consumers to spend more time in the same retail location.

Urban Design and Planning
Results suggest that consumers enjoy having trees in retail shopping districts! An orderly and well maintained planting scheme, of both trees and accessory vegetation, produces the highest ratings. The public prefers both dense and more open canopied trees, thus careful pruning can be used to thin and open up a tree canopy. This permits more visibility of signs and store fronts while providing the forest amenities that consumers appreciate.

Introducing the New Community Association Outreach Coordinator

Help Available to Make Community Association Landscapes Florida-Friendly!

Community associations and managers have a new resource for making landscapes Florida-friendly.

Horticulturist Lisa Strange has been hired by the University of Florida's Extension Service to provide Florida-friendly landscape information to managers and associations of community properties in Hillsborough and Polk Counties. The information is based on the Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Program of the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences' (IFAS) nine Florida-friendly landscaping principles. Incorporation of the nine principles can reduce outdoor water use, protect water quality and enhance the health and beauty of properties.

To find out more about this program, contact Lisa Strange, FYN Community Association Coordinator at: Hillsborough County – (813) 744-5519 x 142 or visit the website http://hillsborough_fyn.ifas.ufl.edu.
Urban Trees and Tampa Bay

By Rob Northrop

The trees in our backyards and open areas create a soothing diversity of color and form in our otherwise angular urban environment. They sway and rustle in the wind, provide a gymnasium for the neighborhood squirrels and children.

They often have sentimental value when we remember how and when they were planted or the family events that occurred in and around them. All of these values, there are many more, reflect the influence trees can and do have on our personal lives. These same trees also play an important role in the restoration of Tampa Bay.

Nitrogen has been identified as a primary pollutant in the bay. Its presence in an overabundance affects the bay’s ability to support living organisms. The principle sources of excess nitrogen reaching the bay are storm water runoff and atmospheric deposition. The trees in our yards and along roadways influence both volume of storm water runoff and quality of the air.

Trees reduce storm water runoff through interception of rainfall, allowing some of the rain to evaporate, while directing water slowing into the ground. Studies have demonstrated that increasing tree cover area by 5% in a community leads to an approximately 2% reduction in storm water runoff.

Using low maintenance or native trees enhances the pollutant prevention effects by reducing the need for the use of fertilizers and pesticides around the home. Reducing storm water runoff not only decreases flooding and the quantity of pollutants washed from our lawns, streets, and parking lots into the bay, but it is economically viable.

It is estimated that 24% of the nitrogen that enters Tampa Bay is coming directly from the atmosphere. Research has established that trees can remove a number of pollutants, including nitrogen dioxide, from the atmosphere. Other pollutants, associated with human health problems, are also removed from the air including sulfur dioxide, ozone, carbon monoxide, and particulate matter. A single mature tree has been estimated to remove up to 10 pounds of air pollutants per year.

While your trees play a considerable role in maintaining the health of the bay and metropolitan region, they are also adding economic value to your home and community. Research has demonstrated that property values increase from 5 to 19% with trees. Retail and commercial businesses benefit from the positive environment that attracts and welcomes customers. One survey in Georgia found that 74% of potential patrons preferred shops with trees and landscaping, and that these customers were willing to pay 12% more for the products they purchased.

Planting and maintaining a tree is one of the many positive ways to participate in the restoration of the Tampa Bay Estuary (see TBEP website, http://www.tbep.org/).
1st Annual Tree and Landscape Workshop for Neighborhood and Home Owner Associations

Saturday, December 2, 2006, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Location: University of Florida – Hillsborough County Extension, Seffner, Florida

9 a.m. – Welcome – effective and efficient landscape management. Rob Northrop

9:15 a.m. – Developing tree and landscaping maintenance contracts that meet your needs. Lisa Strange

10 a.m. – Right Tree for the Right Place: native and ornamental tree planting in Central FL. Rob Northrop

11 a.m. – Hurricane pruning trees and palms, a damaging myth. Rob Northrop

11:45 a.m. – Integrating lawn and palm fertilization. Rob Northrop

12:15 p.m. – Questions and answers. Lisa Strange and Rob Northrop

Fee: $10 (Make checks out to the Tree & Landscape Advisory Committee) covers cost of refreshments and workshop materials.

Registration: contact Jennifer Fernandez, 813-744-5519 x104, or JCFern@ufl.edu

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1st Annual Tree & Landscape Workshop for Neighborhood & Homeowner Associations
Mail to: Hillsborough County Extension Attn: Jennifer Fernandez 5339 CR 579, Seffner, FL 33584-3334

Name: ___________________________________________________ Phone: ---------------------------

HOA or Neighborhoods Assn: _________________________________________________________________

Mailing Address: ____________________________________________________________________________

E-mail Address: ______________________________________________________________________________

“Those who contemplate the beauty of the Earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.”

Rachel Carson

urbanforestry.ifas.ufl.edu
Pruning palms

Pruning palms is most often undertaken to remove dead and dying fronds and developing flowers and fruits to reduce risk and enhance aesthetics.

Most palms require regular pruning to keep them attractive and safe. Many palms maintain a set number of live fronds. Dead fronds are not detrimental to the health of the tree. If you find an excessive number of older yellow fronds, determine the cause before pruning. There could be a severe nutrient problem caused by a potassium or magnesium deficiency that could worsen if the palm is pruned or fertilized with high nitrogen or the wrong type of fertilizer.

If possible do not to remove live, healthy fronds. All live fronds store nutrients critical for the long-term health of the palm. If you must prune then avoid removing live fronds that are growing horizontally or growing upward.

Fronds removed should be severed close to the petiole base without damaging living trunk tissue. There is little reason to shave or sand the trunk smooth. Dead fronds can be removed with a small chain saw. Use a hand saw to cut developing flower and fruit stalks that emerge between live fronds so you do not injure the surrounding fronds.

Native Tree Corner

Each newsletter will highlight one of west central Florida’s native trees suitable for planting in backyards and neighborhood common areas. These trees naturally offer a sense of place, enhance wildlife habitat and water quality, and are often low-maintenance.

**Cabbage Palm** (*Sabal palmetto*)

Capable of reaching 90 feet or more in the woods (when shaded or protected by surrounding trees) but usually seen at 40 to 50 feet in height, this amazingly sturdy native palm has a rough, fibrous trunk. Cabbage Palm is topped with a very dense, 10 to 15-foot-diameter, round crown of deeply cut, curved, palmate leaves. This is South Carolina’s and Florida’s state tree, and is well-suited to use as a street planting, framing tree, specimen, or clustered in informal groupings.

The four to five-foot-long, creamy white, showy flower stalks in the summer are followed by small, shiny, green to black fruits which are relished by squirrels, raccoons, and other wildlife.
Hillsborough Co. Coop Extension
5339 County Rd 579
Seffner, FL 33584

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We’re on the Web!
Visit us at:
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