

Archive for March, 2009

Preventing Tree/Sign Conflicts

Saturday, March 7th, 2009

Another aspect of the “Right Tree, Right Place” concept is planting the right species in locations where they won’t interfere with business signs; and thus drawing the ire of businesses so affected. Signs are the lifeblood of most businesses, but so is a friendly, inviting shopping environment. Trees can provide a softened touch to an otherwise harsh downtown or mall area, and reduce even the most imposing buildings to human scale, and they can do it without interfering with signs.

To prevent sign/tree conflicts, half of the problem can be solved through better sign size and placement, but the other half of the equation rests with those who plant and care for street and mall trees. Rigid spacing of trees is sometimes necessary or desirable; e.g. regularly spaced trees in a mall parking lot provide for as many shady parking spaces as possible. But, to solve tree/sign conflicts, flexibility about where to plant has to be the rule.

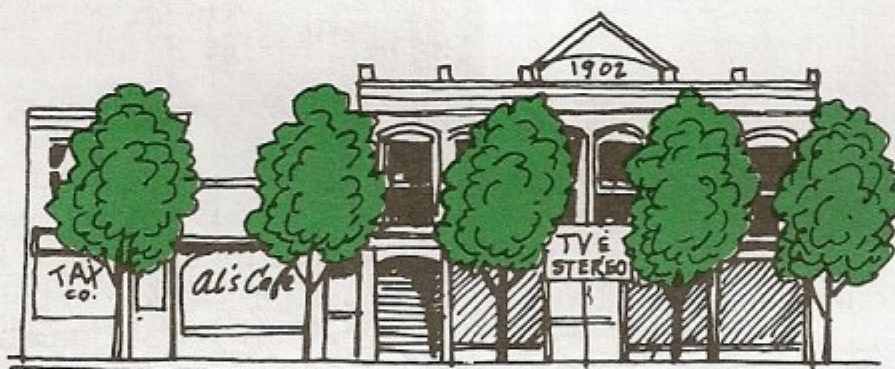
1. Plant in the right place – variable spacing, as well as a mixture of species and tree sizes can add interest and aesthetic appeal to a community’s streets and shopping malls.
2. Plant the right tree – uniformity of species and sizes may be well for accomplishing landscaping designs, but it can result in unforeseen consequences with regard to signs; resulting in the conflicts that create resentment by business owners.
3. Prune to aid visibility – whether it is a limb obstructing a stop sign, or a shade tree in front of a store, trees in most communities need annual inspections and regular pruning to prevent tree/sign conflicts. A nice tree in front of a business, which has been properly pruned so the business’ sign can be read underneath the canopy, not only makes the business owner happy, but creates a better environment for shoppers; plus it keeps the crown out of the way of vehicles and vandals.



WRONG: *The signs are visible, but without trees the streetscape is harsh and unpleasant.*



WRONG: *Because the trees are not properly pruned and one of the signs is poorly located, business signs are difficult to see.*



RIGHT: *By correctly locating signs and pruning trees, business areas can have both beautiful trees and readable signs.*

Avoiding Tree/Sign Conflicts

The above illustration is a simplified, but informative, version of information presented in the National Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA Bulletin No. 11. Thanks to the Arbor Day Foundation.

Planting To Attract Wildlife

Saturday, March 14th, 2009

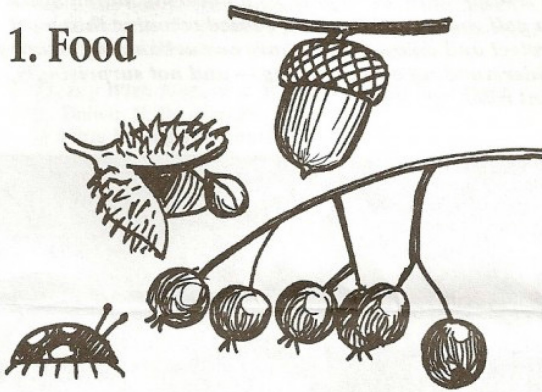
It may be hard to accept, as you watch a deer munch on some shrubbery in your backyard, but most people enjoy seeing all kinds of wildlife in their urban or suburban settings. This is particularly true with regard to birds, small mammals, amphibians, and even some reptiles (poisonous snakes probably excepted). Undoubtedly attracting birds is the favored objective, and many species of trees, shrubs, etc. are planted to attract our feathered friends. By understanding a few basic principles, you can directly affect the variety and quantity of wildlife around your home and in your community.

With a little planning, the usual benefits we expect to receive from tree plantings (shade, wind protection, erosion control, etc.) can be easily multiplied to also benefit wildlife. For example, when making an ornamental planting, you might substitute a bird-rich flowering dogwood in place of an eastern redbud that has only limited value for birds. Or, when planting for quick shade, male boxelders can be used instead of hybrid poplars. The boxelder growth is almost as rapid, and it attracts at least five species of birds, while the poplar is favored by none.

In order to survive, wildlife needs three basic things: food, cover, and water. Providing these are the actions that will attract all manner of wildlife to your habitat. In addition, by providing different arrangements of the three basics, you can make a big difference in what kinds, and quality, of wildlife you can attract. There are many sources of information out there concerning different planting schemes to attract wildlife, but a good place to start is your local Missouri Department of Conservation, or University of Missouri Extension Office. They should have handout information, and will also know where to refer you for more detailed assistance.

Following are some illustrations from the National Arbor Day Foundation that should help you get started.

1. Food



Each tree and shrub species has a different food value and attracts different animals. Some, like cherries, may be relished by as many as 40 species of birds. Others, such as the widely-planted forsythia, or the fruitless cultivars that are so popular in urban settings, have little wildlife value. Having a wide variety of trees with high food value is the single best way to increase your pleasure of viewing wildlife — and in the long run it is cheaper than buying birdfeed!

Champion wildlife feeders include:

Summer Fruit

Cherries and Plums
Dogwoods
Mulberries
Shadbush (Amelanchier)
Viburnums

Fall and Winter Fruit

(These are especially important to help wildlife through the worst part of the year and to save early arriving summer birds that get caught in late season snow storms.)

Apples and Crabapples
Dogwoods
Eastern Redcedar
Hackberry
Hawthorns
Mountain Ash
Sumacs
Viburnums

Seeds

Alders
Ashes
Birches
Firs
Hemlock
Maples
Spruces

Mast

(Nuts and acorns. Mast producers are as valuable to squirrels and deer as they are to many bird species.)

Buckeyes
Butternut
Black Walnut
Chestnuts
Hazels
Hickories
Oaks

Insects

(With the exception of butterflies, attracting insects is usually not one's goal. However, most are more interesting than harmful, and many birds rely almost exclusively on insects for food. Eliminate insects and birdlife is sure to follow.)

Birches
Elms
Maples
Oaks
Planetree and Sycamore
Willows

2. Cover

Cover is essential to attract wildlife. It provides protection for breeding, nesting, sleeping, traveling, and hiding from enemies. Ideal cover for a wide range of animals is provided by dense plantings of conifers. In urban settings, even a single spruce tree will help, but all the better if you have space for a group of conifers or a hemlock hedge. Wild tangles, vines, and thorny shrubs in odd corners or narrow spaces such as between a garage and the property line also provide excellent cover. Sometimes cover plantings can serve the double purpose of controlling foot and bike traffic or providing privacy.



Some Excellent Cover Plants

Cedars/Junipers

Firs

Hemlock

Hollies

Live Oaks

Mulberries

Pines

Spruces

Barberries

Blackberries/Raspberries

Greenbrier

Honeysuckles

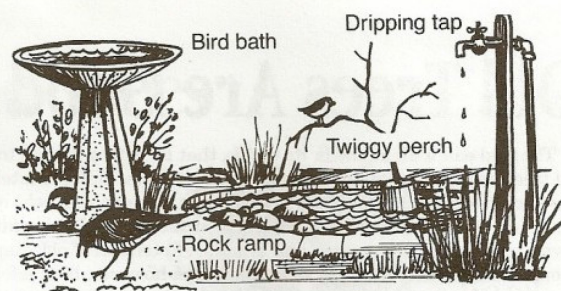
Viburnums

Virginia Creeper

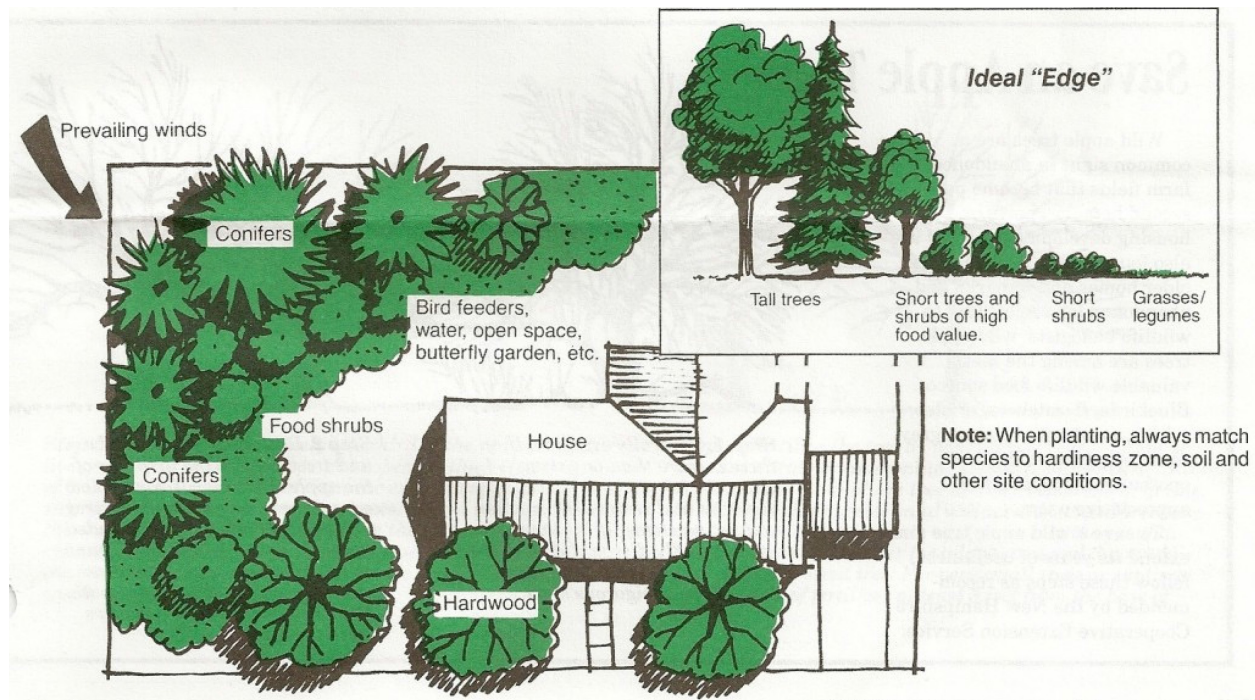
3. Water

Water is as essential for wildlife as it is for humans. Provide it and you will be rewarded with more birds, butterflies and other wildlife.

- ✓ Provide water in winter as well as summer. Keep it free of ice with a commercially available bird bath heater, car dipstick heater, or an aquarium heater. Use only safe, outdoor wiring.
- ✓ A small pool can be created by placing a child's plastic swimming tub in a hole so the top is even with ground level. Add a perch over the water and pile some rocks inside to make a ramp for small animals.
- ✓ Wildlife prefer moving water. A dripping hose works well; otherwise, change water regularly.



- ✓ Ponds and enlarged springs or seeps are paradise for wildlife. Even digging a hole where culverts or drain pipes discharge will help attract wildlife.
- ✓ Once you begin providing water, do not let it dry up.

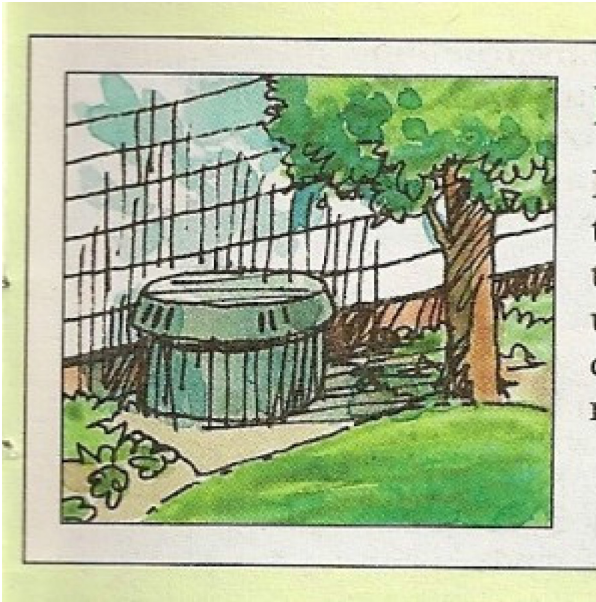


Planting To Save Energy

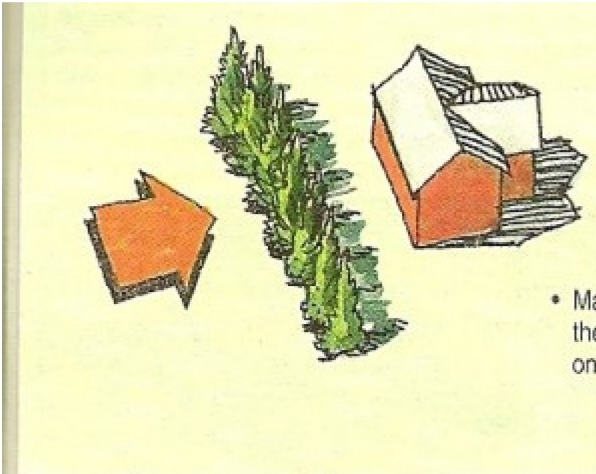
Saturday, March 21st, 2009

Carefully placed trees can provide energy savings for almost any home, in any location. Trees provide cooling shade during the summer, protect your home from chilling winds in the winter, and maximize energy gains from winter sunlight; if planted and grown correctly. Such savings can cut annual home energy use by as much as 15-35 %.

For example: planting a tree or shrubs to shade your air conditioning compressor can increase cooling efficiency by as much as 10%. Just shading the compressor can do that!



The average frame home may lose as much as 30% of the heat from within, if not protected by a windbreak planted on the side of the house from which the prevailing wind blows. Evergreen trees planted close together to create a complete wall against the wind will do the trick quite nicely. Use species adapted to your area, and plant them so the line is one to two mature tree heights away from the house for maximum effect.

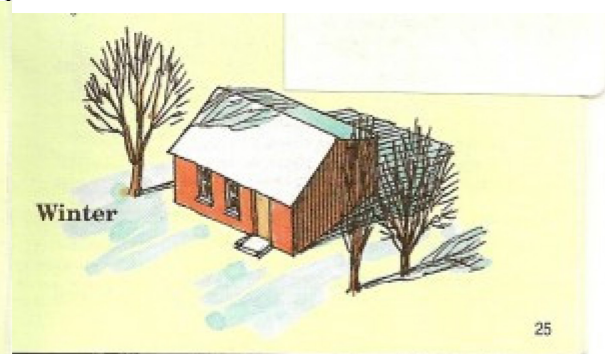
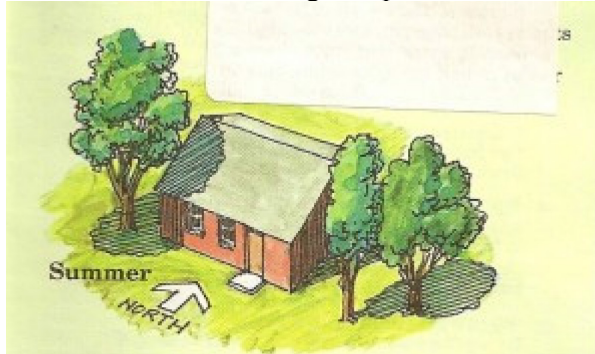


If blowing snow is a problem, drifts will accumulate on the downwind side of a windbreak. Be sure to leave enough room between the wind barrier and sidewalks and driveways.

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Work with the sun. Deciduous (broadleaf) trees are energy savers. They shade the home in the summer, and help warm it in the winter when they shed their leaves to let in warming sunlight. Believe it or not, best results come from planting on the east and west sides of the house, rather than the south side. Sounds strange, huh? However, it's true because during the hottest part of a summer day, the sun is almost directly overhead, and trees have to be planted too close to the house to do any good. East and west is best. Even northwest is a good spot, because it keeps the late afternoon sun minimized.



Planting to save energy is another aspect of Right Tree, Right Place that can really pay off for those of us in need of ways to reduce the cost of living. Sounds to me like that may be everyone!
(Illustrations from the National Arbor Day Foundation)

Care Of Newly Planted Trees

Saturday, March 28th, 2009

A few simple maintenance procedures will help ensure well-established, healthy trees.

TREE MAINTENANCE TIMETABLE			
Years After Planting	Necessary	Desirable	Optional
0-3	Watering Mulching/ Weeding	Pest Control	Fertilizing
3-5	Mulching/ Weeding Pruning	Watering Pest Control	Fertilizing
5-10	Pruning	Mulching Pest Control	Fertilizing
10+ years		Pruning	Mulching Fertilizing Pest Control

Water – Be sure to water newly planted trees routinely during the first two years. Apply enough water to keep the soil around the roots moist, but not wet. **DO NOT OVERWATER!** Examine the soil once a week, especially during dry periods, and apply extra water only if rainfall has been inadequate. Gravelly or sandy soils may need more frequent watering; silt or clay soils may require less. **DO NOT WATER JUST TO BE WATERING. CHECK FIRST.**

Mulch – Replace mulch every two years or so to maintain a three inch thick layer. Mulch rings may be widened as the tree grows.

Remove any support wires or ties from a tree as soon as possible. Better yet, don't use any if the tree stands alone perfectly well after planting. If used, try to remove them within 3 months of planting, or certainly by the end of the growing season.

Pruning – is generally not necessary the first two years after planting. However, dead or broken branches should be removed immediately. Study and understand pruning guidelines before initiating pruning maintenance.

Fertilization – is seldom required for trees, and can be harmful if applied too liberally. Moderate applications of a balanced formulation, such as 12-12-12, can increase growth of healthy trees and/or encourage flowering in some species. Before fertilizing, seek guidelines for your specific species from certified nurserymen, arborists, or urban foresters. **Note** Fertilizer is not a substitute or remedy for poor growing conditions. Use sparingly on weak or distressed trees.

Pest Control – Spraying pesticides, without having a specific target(s) in mind is not recommended. Consult a certified nurseryman or arborist, or an urban forester or extension specialist to learn the correct control method for pests that can be expected to attack your tree(s). If certain pests are a persistent problem, it may be best to replace the tree with one that has fewer problems.