Shade Trees Defined

Shade trees are large trees with widespread, dense canopies. A shade tree is taller than 25 feet at maturity.

Commonly planted shade trees in the District include oaks, maples, ashes and elms. Shade trees are an investment in the environment, your home's future and future generations.

Shade tree co-pay is $50 (each). All RiverSmart Homes practices require co-payments, which permit up to $1200 in landscaping that reduces stormwater runoff to help the District's streams and rivers.

Stormwater Runoff and the District of Columbia

Stormwater runoff is rainwater that flows off impervious surfaces such as rooftops, driveways, roads, sidewalks and sometimes even lawns. Stormwater runoff travels from these surfaces to our streams, picking up pollutants such as oil and grease from our roadways and driveways as it goes. Nutrients from lawn fertilizers and bacteria from pet waste may also be picked up by stormwater and carried to our streams.

RiverSmart Homes
clean water starts here

A program of the District Department of the Environment

Benefits of Shade Trees

To the Homeowner….
Shade trees require minimal maintenance and provide many advantages for the homeowner. Specifically, shade trees:
- Decrease heating bills up to 15% and cooling bills up to 50%
- Increase property value 10-20%
- Improve health by reducing stress, asthma and sun-causing skin cancer
- Reduce crime – a 2001 study showed apartment buildings with trees and vegetation, had more than 50% fewer total crimes than non-landscaped building
- Provide privacy by muffling the sound from traffic, lawn mowers, and loud neighbors

To the District...
The District is promoting shade trees because they improve the health of local streams and waterways by reducing stormwater runoff and erosion. Trees also:
- Improve air quality by removing small pollutant particulates (i.e. sulfur dioxide, ozone, etc.)
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by taking up carbon dioxide
- Create habitat for plants and animals
- Mitigate the urban *heat-island effect* by shading our homes and streets, (*urban/suburban areas are 2 to 10°F (1 to 6°C) hotter than rural areas*)

American Forests satellite imagery shows dramatic decline in District's tree canopy, shown in green, from 1974 (above) to 1997 (below).
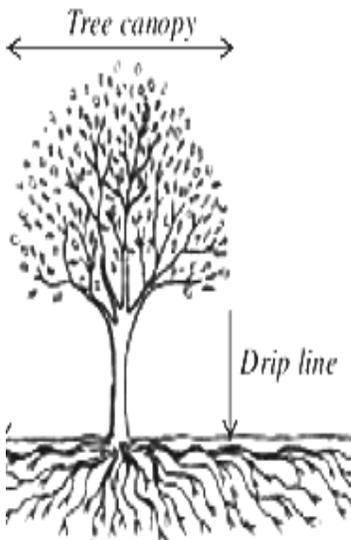
How to Plant a Shade Tree

There are a few things to consider when looking to plant a shade tree in your yard. For instance, the location of utility wires (both above and buried) and the distance from objects such as your house, sidewalk, fence and other trees, must be taken into account. It is also smart to consider the amount of sun in your yard when planting a tree.

Any tree planted would need to be cared for - especially during the first two years after planting. During this time the trees will need to be watered regularly - especially during summer months.

Tree canopy

Drip line

Did you know?

In one year, an acre of mature trees absorbs the amount of carbon dioxide produced when you drive your car 26,000 miles.

Want to BayScape your yard?
RiverSmart Homes can help.

The District Department of the Environment (DDOE) RiverSmart Homes District-wide program offers incentives to homeowners interested in reducing stormwater pollution from their properties.

Find more information about RiverSmart Homes at:
ddoe.dc.gov/riversmarthomes or call 202-535-2240