

HOW TO USE THIS ACTIVITY

This activity can be used for an in person event at a library or sent home with patrons. This lesson is most appropriate for grades K-4. Feel free to adapt the instructions as you see fit.

There is a brief background on tree benefits followed by two variations of the same activity (for both in person and at home instructions). One variation has participants drawing a picture and the other variation is writing a story. Choose which is best and age appropriate for your audience.

An optional activity is also included for the in person or at home options.

One copy of each items is included:

- Library Event Instructions
- At Home Instructions
- "Two Sides to the Pet Store Tree" Story
- Benefits and Drawbacks Handout

If you choose to send this activity home with patrons, you will need to make copies of: instructions, "Two Sides to the Pet Store Tree" story and Benefits/Drawbacks Handout.

This activity was adapted from the Wisconsin LEAF Program, Urban Forest Lesson Guide.

For any questions on how to use this activity or supporting documents, contact:

Gwen Kozlowski
UVM Extension & Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program
gwen.kozlowski@uvm.edu or 802-651-8343

LIBRARY EVENT INSTRUCTIONS

BACKGROUND (For instructor)

Urban forests are the trees and shrubs growing in our towns and cities. This includes street trees, parks, village greens, town forests; the trees where we live, work and play! These trees provide us with a variety of benefits that improve the environment and support human health. The benefits are provided by individual trees, and the impact of the entire tree canopy in an area can be measured. For the purpose of this activity, the individual trees are the focus.



The tree canopy is the leaves and branches of a tree or group of trees. It slows rain during storms, which reduces the number of gallons of stormwater that need to be handled by stormwater treatment facilities. That also means less water flows across the ground picking up pollutants along the way. Additionally, trees prevent soil erosion by holding the soil in place with their expansive root systems.

Areas shaded by trees are cooler than those in the sun. By providing shade and releasing water vapor, trees can help reduce urban heat islands. Cooling the air a few degrees using the shade of trees can have a big positive impact and with proper placement, trees can reduce home energy costs by 20%. Trees also clean the air by absorbing pollutant gases and filtering out particulates.

Trees provide a canopy for wildlife by creating shelter and habitat for birds, insects, and mammals. The sounds of traffic and other noises are reduced by the leaves of plants. Trees are especially good at reducing higher-pitched sounds that are most troubling to people. Trees also help screen views to prevent us from seeing things we'd rather not and can increase property values by as much as 15% by contributing to overall curb appeal.

Trees directly impact our lives at all scales; as individuals, communities, and as a state. In this lesson, participants will explore the benefits and challenges of urban trees.



Activity: Variation 1 (Non-writing option)

Needs: "Two Sides to the Pet Store Tree" story, paper, writing utensil: pencils, crayons, or markers

1. Ask your group to describe some jobs they do at around their home or at school to help out. Examples include taking out the garbage, helping wash the dishes at home, or passing out worksheets at school. Tell participants that trees have jobs, too, and in this activity they'll learn about some of those jobs.
2. Tell your group that you are going to read a story to them. They should listen carefully because you will ask them later to draw pictures about the story. Read the "Two Sides to the Pet Store Tree" story.
3. After you have read the story, ask your group to draw two pictures. The first picture should be about what happened in the story you read. They should include the good and bad things that were described about trees. The second picture should be about what the participants think will happen next.

(OVER)

LIBRARY EVENT INSTRUCTIONS

Variation 1 (continued)

4. Ask participants to share their pictures with the group. Discuss why they came up with the endings they did. Discuss why Mr. Lyons and Kesha had different views of the situation. (Mr. Lyons was focusing on the drawbacks of the tree to his business. Kesha was focusing on the benefits of the tree because the drawbacks did not affect her.)



Activity: Variation 2 (Writing option)

Needs: "Two Sides to the Pet Store Tree" story, benefits/drawbacks page, paper, writing utensils

1. Ask your group to describe some jobs they do at around their home or at school to help out. Examples include taking out the garbage, helping wash the dishes at home, or passing out worksheets at school. Tell participants that trees have jobs, too, and in this activity they'll learn about some of those jobs.
2. Tell participants that you are going to read a story to them. They should pay attention to how the story is written, because they will be assigned to write their own story in a similar fashion. Read the "Two Sides to the Pet Store Tree" story.
3. Divide group into pairs (or work individually). Pass out the "Benefits and Drawbacks" handout to each pair of (or individual) participants. Discuss the information on the handout, and give local examples as needed to help participants understand. Explain that each person in the story views things differently.
4. Tell the group that each pair should write their own story. Just as in the story they just heard, it should include a conversation between a property owner and a kid who have different view points. They should use the information on the "Benefits and Drawbacks" handout to decide who the property owner is, what drawbacks to the tree the property owner sees, and what benefits to the tree the kid sees. Their story, unlike the one you read, should also include a resolution. Stress the need to write objectively about both viewpoints even if they don't agree personally.
5. Have volunteers read their stories aloud. Discuss the different scenarios and endings to the story. Discuss why participants chose the components of the story they did. Discuss why the people in their stories had differing views of the situation.



Additional Activity (Optional)

Remind participants that the people they heard/wrote about in their stories had different opinions about trees. Ask participants, in groups or singly, to create a rhyme or song about how they feel about the trees and/or urban forest in their community and how the trees and/or urban forest help their community.

AT HOME INSTRUCTIONS

BACKGROUND (For instructor)

Urban forests are the trees and shrubs growing in our towns and cities. This includes street trees, parks, village greens, town forests; the trees where we live, work and play! These trees provide us with a variety of benefits that improve the environment and support human health. The benefits are provided by individual trees, and the impact of the entire tree canopy in an area can be measured. For the purpose of this activity, the individual trees are the focus.



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Trees directly impact our lives at all scales; as individuals, communities, and as a state. In this lesson, participants will explore the benefits and challenges of urban trees.



Activity: Variation 1 (Non-writing option)

Needs: "Two Sides to the Pet Store Tree" story, paper, writing utensil: pencils, crayons, or markers

1. Ask your child to describe some jobs they do at around their home or at school to help out. Examples include taking out the garbage, helping wash the dishes at home, or passing out worksheets at school. Tell your child that trees have jobs, too, and in this activity they'll learn about some of those jobs.
2. Tell your child that you are going to read a story to them. They should listen carefully because you will ask them later to draw pictures about the story. "Two Sides to the Pet Store Tree" story.
3. After you have read the story, ask your child to draw two pictures. The first picture should be about what happened in the story you read. They should include the good and bad things that were described about trees. The second picture should be about what the child think will happen next.

(OVER)

AT HOME INSTRUCTIONS

Variation 1 (continued)

4. Have your child share both pictures and discuss why they came up with the endings they did. Discuss why Mr. Lyons and Kesha had different views of the situation. (Mr. Lyons was focusing on the drawbacks of the tree to his business. Kesha was focusing on the benefits of the tree because the drawbacks did not affect her.)



Activity: Variation 2 (Writing option)

Needs: "Two Sides to the Pet Store Tree" story, benefits/drawbacks page, paper, writing utensils

1. Ask your child to describe some jobs they do at around their home or at school to help out. Examples include taking out the garbage, helping wash the dishes at home, or passing out worksheets at school. Tell your child that trees have jobs, too, and in this activity they'll learn about some of those jobs.
2. Tell your child that you are going to read a story to them. They should pay attention to how the story is written, because they will be assigned to write their own story in a similar fashion. Read "Two Sides to the Pet Store Tree" story.
3. Distribute the, "Benefits and Drawbacks" handout to your child. Give local examples as needed to help them understand. Explain that each person in the story views things differently.
4. Tell your child that they should write their own story. Just as in the story they just heard, it should include a conversation between a property owner and a kid who have different view points. They should use the information on the "Benefits and Drawbacks" handout to decide who the property owner is, what drawbacks to the tree the property owner sees, and what benefits to the tree the kid sees. Their story, unlike the one you read, should also include a resolution. Stress the need to write objectively about both viewpoints even if they don't agree personally.
5. Share their story and discuss the different scenarios and endings to the story. Discuss why they chose the components of the story they did. Discuss why the people in their stories had differing views of the situation.



Additional Activity (Optional)

Remind your child that the people they heard/wrote about in their stories had different opinions about trees. Ask your child to create a rhyme or song about how they feel about the trees and/or urban forest in their community and how the trees and/or urban forest help their community.

TWO SIDES OF THE PET STORE TREE STORY

Kesha walks to her friend Molly's house every day after school. Molly lives across town, but Kesha doesn't mind the walk because it was always a little bit different. From her house, she crosses the town green where she may see people enjoying a picnic or playing with their dog. Then she passes the bookstore to see what new books are on display and of course Kesha lingered at the Sweet Shop to admire all the tasty treats in the window.

Each season also provides a new way for her to appreciate this walk too. On sunny, hot days, Kesha walks under the cool, shady canopy provided by the trees lining the street. She looks forward to beautiful fall foliage and in winter it's a delight to see a chickadee or squirrel collecting seeds to stay well fed through the winter.

On a late spring day, Kesha was admiring the full canopy of the leafy trees and crossed the street to enjoy the shade. She stopped to say hello to Mr. Lyons, owner of a pet store, who was speaking to a woman dressed in a hard hat and safety gear. Mr. Lyons said hello to Kesha and turned to the woman to say "Thank you for stopping by. I'll let you know when I'm ready to remove the trees."

Kesha asked Mr. Lyons "Who was that and what do you mean remove the trees?" Mr. Lyons replied, "She was an arborist, who takes care of trees and I'm going to have to cut these two trees down. They are causing me too many problems." Kesha did not know that a tree can cause problems since she took time each day on her walk to appreciate the beauty and all of the benefits these trees provide.

"What kind of problems do the trees cause you?" asked Kesha. Mr. Lyons replied that the fruit and seeds from the tree fall onto the sidewalk and he had to sweep them off so no one hurt themselves walking on them. When the leaves fall, they fill up the gutter and prevent stormwater from running through it, causing a big mess. Mr. Lyons continued "The leaves also block the sign for my store. I'm trying to run a business and if people can't see the sign, they won't know we are here."

Kesha understood Mr. Lyons but did not think they were very good reasons for cutting down the trees. The trees were not sick and they did not have any dead branches. Kesha wondered if Mr. Lyons knew all the ways that trees are important. She tried to explain, "Mr. Lyons, those leaves that block your sign also shade your store and the sidewalk. I even crossed the street today to enjoy the shade they provide. Lots of people park in front of your store, just because the shade helps keep their cars from getting as hot."

Just this week in school, Kesha learned that trees also act as filters for water and air pollution. The leaves on trees help slow water down when it rains and the ground has more time to soak up the water. The leaves also absorb small particles to help keep the air clean.

She stopped for a moment when she remembered her last important point, "Where will the robins that build their nest in the tree every spring go? They raise their young here."

Mr. Lyons looked a little confused. Why was Kesha trying to convince him not to cut down the trees? What difference did it make to her?

BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS HANDOUT

PROPERTY OWNER (choose one)

- Homeowner
- Store Owner
- Town Manager

DRAWBACKS OF TREES (choose one or more from property owner's point of view)

- **Leaves clog gutters:** In the fall, leaves can collect in the gutters and prevent water from flowing through them.
- **Nuts falling could damage cars or people:** Some trees have nuts that are large and heavy. If they fall on a car or person, they could do damage.
- **Messy fruit:** Some trees have fruit that can make a mess when it falls on the ground, sometimes causing a slippery walking surface.
- **Shade grass:** Trees can shade the ground below such that grass doesn't have enough sun to grow. This is a problem if you are trying to grow grass.
- **Branches too close to buildings:** A tree's branches can grow into buildings and may damage the building. They need to be pruned (cut) to prevent damage. Sometimes trees have to be cut down because they were improperly planted too close to a building.
- **Costs for establishment, maintenance, and removal:** It costs money to ensure proper planting and maintenance.

BENEFITS OF TREES (choose one or more from kid's point of view)

- **Shade:** Shade can help keep buildings cool in the summer and make it cost less to use the air conditioner. Shade over parked cars can help keep them cooler too.
- **Animal Habitat:** Many animals use trees for shelter and food. Trees protect animals from danger. Birds build nests in trees. Even if a bird doesn't build a nest, it can sit in a tree for safety. Squirrels spend most of their time in trees. Their nests are there, and they get food from trees too.
- **Absorb Air Pollution:** Dust and other small particles in the air that are part of pollution are trapped by leaves. Trees help keep the air clean.
- **Water Pollution:** Trees slow water down when it rains. That means the ground has more time to soak up the water, and not as much water has to flow across the ground into storm sewers. When water flows across the ground, it takes pollution that is on the ground with it.
- **Block Unpleasant Views:** Trees that are planted in the right place can block the view of something unpleasant.
- **Muffle Noise:** The leaves of trees can make noise from traffic and other things less noticeable because the leaves muffle the sound.
- **Reduce stress:** The calming effect of nearby trees and urban greening can significantly reduce stress levels.