



Why Trees?

The many benefits of trees

As well as their aesthetic value, trees have a large part to play in carbon reduction and storage and improving the health of the environment - and of the human race. Here are just a few of the many benefits healthy tree coverage can bring:

- **Clean air** - They absorb and filter particulates, carbon dioxide and emit oxygen.
- **Flood prevention** - They absorb and hold back water, especially in the upper reaches of rivers, slowing down the rush into cities which often causes flooding. York has been a particular victim of flooding in the last few years.
- **Fuel** - Dry, seasoned logs provide a relatively cheap, clean and comforting source of heat, especially when burnt in efficient wood-burning stoves.
- **Wildlife** - Berries and other fruits are a valuable source of food for a wide range of birds, animals and insects. Shelter from predators encourages wildlife to thrive and so increases biodiversity
- **Timber products** - Oak, beech, ash and cherry are just some of the trees that provide a wide range of furniture, tools and other products.
- **Recreation** - Woodland walks, benches with woodland views, play areas and dens are some of the ways trees can help people of all ages to relax and enjoy themselves. Dogwalkers know that their charges revel in a wooded environment.
- **Education** - Watching and studying trees gives an example of and an insight into phenomena such as growth, propagation, reproduction and animal behaviour.
- **Property value** - Estate agents claim that trees, a hedge or even a solitary tree in or close to a property can make it more attractive to potential buyers. Studies suggest a 7% increase is not unusual.
- **Shade** - Not only for wildlife, but humans also – even in the fickle British climate it can sometimes be hot enough to make shade desirable!
- **Health and peace** - More studies suggest that patients – in hospitals and at home – recover more quickly when they have a view of trees through their windows or from balconies.
- **Overall economic benefits** - By their ability to reduce air pollution and flooding, as well as their overall value in increasing people's physical and mental health, millions of pounds per year are saved on the cost of the NHS, drainage and sewerage.

Trees came before homo sapiens, who has always relied on them for protection, food and leisure, and revered them as symbols of growth, death and rebirth.

- **Folklore** - the Tree of life, the sacred fig, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the homes of tree spirits.
- **Childhood memories** - Climbing (and falling out of) them; swinging; dens and hiding; 'scrumping'
- **Literature and the arts**: The Ents from The Lord of the Rings; Winnie the Pooh's honey tree; Robert Frost's Stopping by woods... Hockney's trees on the Wolds
- **Walking with or without dogs** - Dogs love trees too
- **Forest bathing** - Taking in the physical and mental benefits of the forest.
- **Organic fodder** - An increasing use of woodland for chickens, sheep and pigs to browse off woodland grass and leaves.

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