



STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH *All of God's Creation*

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, September 17, 2023

Trees Provide Beauty, Food, and Shelter from the Heat

"I think that I shall never see a poem lovely as a tree," wrote Joyce Kilmer in 1919. Those of us fortunate to live in wooded areas or near parks and trails can certainly testify to this sentiment. However, many of our brothers and sisters are not so fortunate.

"Roughly 80% of Americans live in urban areas, and roughly 80% of those city dwellers live in neighborhoods with less than 20% tree cover. And those places with minimal tree canopy experience significantly higher temperatures than green neighborhoods just miles away. That's true in big cities like Newark and New Orleans, and smaller ones like Burlington, Vermont, and Erie, Pennsylvania.

The list of quality-of-life indicators that worsen or decline as the presence of trees declines is long — health conditions from heat stroke to asthma, outdoor activity, air pollution, flooding and chemicals from stormwater run-off, energy costs and home values among them. The most vulnerable are hardest hit: children, the elderly and pregnant women.... **Communities in which nearly all residents experience poverty have 41% less canopy than those with nearly no poverty.**

The need couldn't be simpler to state: Plant more trees where there are too few.... An historic spending package approved last year ... includes \$1.5 billion for planting and maintaining urban trees, with the first \$1 billion in grants expected to be announced at the end of the summer. [That's good news, but] it's just the starting point (the original proposal was \$3 billion). **The average cost nationally to plant and establish a tree in an urban area is \$300.** Five million trees planted will close a sliver of the tree equity gap." (Ben Jealous, executive director of the Sierra Club and a professor of practice at the University of Pennsylvania, *Sierra Club Insider*, 7/25/23)

"The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) is committed to increasing the level of tree canopy (the area of land with trees), especially in neighborhoods with few trees and high average temperatures. 'Good' tree canopy coverage is considered to be 30% of the land area. In the City of Philadelphia, some neighborhoods have as little as 2.5%. " (PHS, *How to Get a Street Tree in Philadelphia*, 11/1/22)

If you're looking for a tree-studded, family friendly fall experience, attend the **Philadelphia Orchard Project's (POP) annual Orchard Celebration**, a fun afternoon of orchard exploration and community connection at POP's Learning Orchard at the Woodlands located at 4000 Woodland Avenue in West Philadelphia. It takes place on **Saturday September 23rd from 12-3pm.**

Celebrate the fall harvest, honor POP's volunteers and partners and enjoy some delicious locally grown fruit and other refreshments. This event is sliding scale, and all are welcome to attend. [Reserve your spot for the orchard celebration.](#)

"Ever since the tree has flourished, mighty and yet kind! Nowhere else can beast or man sweeter solace find." (From *The First Tree* by Lenore Hetrick)

Comments on this column may be directed to the Social Justice Committee at socialjustice@holycrossphl.org.