



Stress in the city

It is an undisputed fact that trees benefit human life by contributing to our health and positively affect communities ecologically, socially, economically and physically.

As Johannesburg is one of the most tree-rich cities in the world today, appearing in satellite images similar to a man-made urban forest, the history of this city's love affair with trees started about a 138 years ago.

The Highveld (the portion of the South African inland plateau with an altitude above roughly 1500 m but below 2100 m) was a typical savannah/grassland ecosystem consisting of very few defined trees.

During the 1880s various species of trees from other areas of southern Africa as well as abroad were introduced for fodder, fuel, fruit, wind breakers and wood production. Some of the first oak trees introduced into Johannesburg were from seeds collected from the original

planting of Jan van Reibeek's Oak Avenue in Cape Town and were planted for fodder production by the Bezuidenhout family in what is now known today as Bezuidenhout Park.

With the discovery of gold in this area, plantations of blue gums were hastily planted in order to supply much needed props for the mining industry. During these early pioneer days, the mines, in their search for suitable trees, opened a tree production nursery at what is now the Horticultural Training Centre at Zoo Lake, cultivating various tree species to test their suitability for mine props. This resulted plantations of blue gums being developed in Saxonwold, Parktown, Langlaagte, Craighall and the Fairlands area with many other species of trees being used as the first street and garden trees in Parktown.

In 1904 the first street trees were planted in Johannesburg's town square and by the late 1990s an estimated 6-million trees

had been planted within the boundaries of the old Johannesburg.

With the region's growth, more open spaces were developed as parks and cemeteries, and the planting of trees continued with a staggering 1.2 million trees within parks and on pavements and an estimated 4.8 million trees in private gardens to date.



Apart from trees creating the obvious ecosystem benefits to provide a habitat and food for birds and other animals, trees are doing a lot more than cleaning air and releasing oxygen.

Planting a tree is normally a lifelong investment. How well this investment grows depends on the type of tree selected, the location, the care provided during planting and the follow-up care after planting. Getting your new tree off to a healthy start will help the tree mature to its full size and ensures it will provide a variety of benefits throughout its lifetime.

But just exactly how does a tree in your environment contribute to your life?

The leaves and bark of trees are incredible organs for cleaning our air and giving back oxygen abundantly. They absorb and take care of toxins endemic to the air of an industrialized nation, filtering out nitrogen oxide, ammonia and ozone from the air, replenishing the environment with essential oxygen for all oxygen dependent creatures around.

It is estimated that one large tree can supply a day's supply of oxygen for four people.

Tree roots strain out large molecules, such as heavy metals, effectively from the

groundwater of toxins as the water cycle progresses, producing cleaner drinking water for areas fed by groundwater, as opposed to those fed by reservoirs.

Unsurprisingly, trees are able to provide not only a wind breaker where needed but the shade trees create when planted in a favourable position, could assist in

cutting down on your air-conditioning bills during summer.

Planted sufficiently, trees can make a considerable contribution to reduce noise level from a freeway or a busy street, as well as increase your privacy as needed - a much respected (and controversial) issue in the suburbs lately.



ON THE TERRACE

Generally, lush tree-rich urban areas have higher property prices as they appear established and peaceful which contributes to the value of a higher valued lifestyle. The estimate is that well-cared for landscaped properties with trees are 10-20% more valuable than non-landscaped properties.

When students and employees are given the opportunity to relax or express themselves in natural environments, most have demonstrated higher productivity and increased focus across the spectrum of intellectual capabilities while decreasing the extreme effects of stress, depression and ADHD.



Technology available today enables us to bring all the benefits of trees right into our houses, offices, shopping malls without putting foot in an outside garden. Currently a range of really big tree containers with multiple maintenance and managing options are available at prices that could just un-root your previous financial assumptions – bringing peace and tranquillity INSIDE.... 

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