



Trees are the Answer



I had a bumper sticker on my car a few years back that said "Trees are the Answer". There is a lot of truth in that statement. Trees can answer many of our water and air quality questions. They are magnificent creations of nature.

Trees are critical to maintaining water quality. Acting as a living filter, trees capture rainfall and reduce stormwater runoff; they filter nutrients and sediments and prevent erosion. When our waterways are buffered by surrounding trees and shrubs, runoff washing into the river is greatly reduced. Trees also reduce stormwater runoff from non-waterfront properties. All water running off of our lawns and going into the storm drain goes directly back into the river.

Trees are one of our most important producers of oxygen and they store major amounts of carbon dioxide, a primary global

warming gas. Trees precipitate dust and other airborne pollutants to settle on the ground and, through their root systems, they stabilize the water table and play an important and effective part in soil conservation and erosion control.

Trees make life more comfortable by providing shade to cool the air and land and by reducing noise levels and glare. On top of all of this, they add beauty and serenity to our lives, and they provide habitat for insects, birds and other wildlife.

To restore and protect the Lynnhaven River, we need to protect our trees. We need to maintain the healthy trees in our watershed and continue to plant new trees. On the reverse side, you will find some good tree choices for Virginia Beach to get you started thinking about where you might add a tree to your landscape.

Tree Protection

Virginia Beach has been a tree city since 1980 and our official city tree is the live oak. Forest restoration is a city priority for aesthetic as well as air and water quality reasons. Our City ordinances and the Chesapeake Bay Protection Act limit tree removal on private property. It is important to understand the ordinances.

The city tree ordinance is designed to protect water quality. It specifically affects homeowners who live in the Resource Protection Area as defined by the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act. This includes land on the Lynnhaven River and its tributaries. If you can see water, marsh, or wetlands from your residence, you may be within the RPA of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

In order to maintain a buffer area to protect water quality, existing vegetation may be removed only if you seek a variance to the ordinance from the City of Virginia Beach. The following guidelines apply to tree removal:

1. Trees may be pruned or removed as necessary to provide for sight lines and vistas, provided that where removed, they shall be replaced with other vegetation that is equally effective in retarding runoff, preventing erosion, and filtering nonpoint source pollution from runoff.
2. Any path shall be constructed and surfaced so as to effectively control erosion.
3. Dead, diseased, or dying trees or shrubbery and noxious weeds may be removed and thinning of trees may be allowed pursuant to sound horticultural practices incorporated into City-adopted standards.
4. For shoreline erosion control projects, trees and woody vegetation may be removed, necessary control techniques employed, and appropriate vegetation established to protect or stabilize the shoreline in accordance with the best available technical advice and applicable permit conditions or requirements.

To find out if your property is in the RPA contact the Virginia Beach Department of Planning at (757) 385-4621. Property owners with lots in the RPA who desire to remove a tree may submit a permit application. Information is available on the City website:

http://www.vbgov.com/government/offices/green/urban-forestry/pages/default.aspx

You can find more information about the riparian buffers on the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)

website: http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/stormwater_management/ripbuff.shtml



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Planting Trees

We hope you are now thinking about a place on your property where you may want to plant a tree. If so, here is a short list of trees for you to consider. This is not meant to be a complete list of choices, but includes native trees in three different size categories that grow well in our climate and have been favored by homeowners.

Three small species for consideration:

- Shadblow Serviceberry (*Amelanchier Canadensis*)
- Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)
- Yaupon Holly (*Ilex vomitoria*)

A medium size tree that may be perfect for your property:

- Sweetbay Magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*)

Or a couple of larger trees if you have more space:

- White Oak (*Quercus alba*)
- Willow Oak (*Quercus phellos*)



Shadblow Serviceberry
(*Amelanchier Canadensis*)



Eastern Redbud
(*Cercis canadensis*)



Yaupon Holly
(*Ilex vomitoria*)



Sweetbay Magnolia
(*Magnolia virginiana*)



White Oak
(*Quercus alba*)



Willow Oak
(*Quercus phellos*)

LYNNHAVEN River NOW

Restoring a legend.