

National Arborist Association

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Trees Reduce Heating Bills

Heat is needed in homes in most parts of the country during winter. The severity of the winter increases heating bills to high amounts. Dropping oil prices are a comfort for people using oil, but electric and gas heat still produce high bills. Irrespective of the the market price for fuel, homeowners can reduce their heating maintenance and usage costs by controlling the temperature around their houses.

Good, healthy trees strategically placed around houses can create a windbreak design which will reduce the effect of wind chill. Even if the temperatures are not low, wind chill can take them way below the freezing point. Homeowners can plant trees around their houses to act as a wind barrier, thereby decreasing the use of heating appliances in the house. Optimum windbreak achieved by using trees provides both wind and snow protection.

According to the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension, the standard windbreak design should have windward rows of dense conifer trees or shrubs, interior rows of tall broadleaf trees, and leeward rows of shrubs or conifers. A very important consideration is to maximize the diversity of species. This reduces the risk of insect, disease or environmental problems and provides excellent wildlife habitat. Trees must be spaced properly, as the health of the windbreak depends on it. The wider the initial spacing, the longer will be the benefit of the windbreak. Generally a windbreak protects an area 10-15 times the size of the trees.

In warm weather mature shade trees can block up to 90% of solar radiation, also reducing your cooling bills. Trees have value other than aesthetics. Taking care of your trees will reap numerous long term intangible benefits for you and generations to come.

While planning where to plant your trees, remember to consult a professional tree care specialist. An easy way to find a commercial arborist or tree care service provider in your area is to use the National Arborist Association's "*Locate your local NAA member companies*" program. You can access this program by calling the NAA at 1-800-733-2622 or by doing a zip code search on their web site at <http://www.natlarb.com>. When you hire an NAA-member tree care company, you are assured that the company you are hiring has access to the most recent information on tree care practices and is insured and/or bonded to protect you and your valuable property.

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