

Trees matter and play an impact role in our desert communities

There are many ways to enhance any landscape, but one of the easiest ways is with trees. While planting a tree will make an immediate visual impact because of its beauty, color, and texture, desert-friendly trees that use less water bring a vast array of benefits from social, communal, environmental, and economic perspectives for everyone – residents and our communities as a whole.



- **Trees provide shade and cooling.** They reduce temperatures through shade and by transpiring water. One mature tree can produce the same cooling effect as ten room-sized air conditioners. This becomes an effective tool in reducing urban heat islands and hot spots in cities.
- **Trees can help us save energy.** Having shade trees in your yard can help reduce your energy bill by allowing you to save on air conditioning. Carefully positioned trees can reduce a household's energy consumption for heating and cooling by up to 25 percent.
- **Mature desert trees use less water.** Once a desert-friendly tree matures, it often needs limited supplemental irrigation during much of the year, and it can use less water than many other landscape plants, especially grass lawns.
- **Trees contribute to our health, help clean the air, and provide oxygen.** Trees breathe in pollutants but then breathe out oxygen. One large tree can provide a day's oxygen supply for up to four people. Planting trees also remains one of the cheapest, most cost-effective means of drawing excess carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

As you can see, trees offer many benefits. Still, they also bring value to your home and your community, which is why cities understand the importance of planting and maintaining trees as part of their urban landscapes. AMWUA members have long been dedicated to community forestry and have been named a [Tree City USA community](#) member by the [Arbor Day Foundation](#) to honor their commitment.

Now that we all have a better understanding of why trees matter, it's essential to select the right ones for your yard, especially those best suited for our desert climate. Like the cities, it is important to incorporate desert-adapted and low-water-use trees to better ensure your trees will thrive while being efficient with water. Making wise choices when planting a tree and maintaining it properly trees enhance our health, yards, communities, and environment.

Before you do any planting this spring, proper planning is a must. A plan will better ensure you reap all the benefits of adding trees to your landscape. Knowing how to properly plant and care for your investment, including proper watering, is also key for a water-efficient yard.

For additional information, you can always rely upon the expertise of your local conservation office and learn more about regional programs such as the SRP Shade Tree Program that provides customers up to two free desert-adapted trees (approximately 4-to-6-foot saplings) to plant in energy-saving locations around your home.

For 55 years, the Arizona Municipal Water Users Association has worked to protect our member cities' ability to provide assured, safe, and sustainable water supplies to their communities. For more water information, visit www.amwua.org.