

## **We Can't Have Too Many Trees!**

It is May and the dogwood petals are blowing in the wind and the misty green leaves of early spring are deepening to the rich greens of summer. Regardless of our love of roses and blooming shrubs, what draws our eyes to the horizon is the wealth of trees.

When a centuries old oak is lost to storm or disease, the landscape changes. Avenues lined with elms whose branches met to shade the sidewalks lost their charm when the elms died. Trees are an essential part of any place we call home.

Perhaps it is a leap to consider trees as a capital investment, but studies show that loss of forest comes with an annual price tag of \$2 to \$5 trillion! Have you read about "TEEB" --The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity study, an attempt to explain the natural world in words that business heads understand by attaching numbers to the world's ecosystems services such as pure drinking water and seacoasts protected from storms and pollution. An analysis of the benefit-to-cost ratios outlines the financial benefits of the money spent to protect the natural world.

These sorts of studies are what drives efforts to protect Chesapeake Bay and tropical rainforests. Studies show that no matter how great the cost to clear pollution from the bay, the increase in the value of fishing and tourism would be even greater. Halting deforestation is one important way to slow the effects of global warming. Norway has poured money into the Amazon Fund that was created to slow the destruction of the rain forest. Brazil has also intensified its efforts to halt illegal logging. Together with Indonesia, Brazil is home to 60% of the world's tropical forests which act as sinkholes for CO<sub>2</sub>s.

With support from environmental groups, the indigenous peoples of the Brazilian rain forest are increasingly able to protect their forests and their forest way of life. The ability of forests to mitigate the impact of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is the main reason these faraway forests are important to all of us.

Not only do opinions change from time to time, but occasionally the 'facts' change as well. Once upon a time we thought trees were felled to enlarge housing developments and farm fields. But today the strongest pressures on deforestation are the increase in palm oil plantations, cattle-raising, and the spread of timbering.

Palm oil is used in a great number of commercial food products, production doubling within the last ten years. The land area harvested for palm oil in Southeast Asia has tripled as demand has increased. Another problem with these extensive palm oil plantations is the emission of large amounts of CO<sub>2</sub>. Often put on land that has been converted from swamp forests, the carbon-rich peat soils release large amounts of heat-trapping carbon dioxide and methane when drained.

And the cows of course, always a debatable subject. Worldwide, 70% of all agricultural land is used for raising cattle for beef and at the same time beef provides only about 6 to 11% of humanity's food. Curiously, if we consider the industry's use of confined feeding operations we may wonder if those figures are not over-stated. What accounts for an apparent contradiction might be the fact that the huge quantity of corn and grain fed to confined animals requires extensive acreage.

Throughout the lumbering industry, efforts are underway for reducing waste, replanting trees, and restoring the land. I haven't seen any supporting figures but if my mailbox is any

indication, the amount of paper wasted in junk mailings has increased by a factor of \_\_\_ : pick a number!

**Seeds of change – small change**

Chia seeds provided the spiky green hair that covered clay heads decades ago and not so long ago there were curious clay animals sporting green fur. The chia seeds stuck to the damp clay because they got sticky when damp. They are super healthy, full of fiber, calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, manganese, copper, iron and zinc. All that power in tiny seeds can be mixed with fruit or yogurt.

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