



State of Utah

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PLANTS SAVE MONEY...REDUCE ENERGY CONSUMPTION

Salt Lake City – Just when you need your air conditioning the most comes the nagging to turn your thermostat up to conserve energy. What is a homeowner to do? A relatively inexpensive way to reduce energy consumption and save money is to plant shrubs and trees.

“The Department of Energy estimates that shade from as few as three trees can save the average household between \$100 and \$250 a year in energy costs,” said Meridith Perkins, urban forestry coordinator for the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands. “However, it is important to choose the proper species and ensure the proper site is selected.”

There are a number of strategies that every homeowner should be aware of that can lead to considerable savings:

- Shade the west and east-facing sides of structures. Shading the west facing side is most important because of heat buildup throughout the day.
- Select deciduous woody species for the west and east sides because they provide shade in the summer, yet allow solar radiation to filter through the leafless canopy in the winter.
- Plant at a distance so vegetation significantly casts shade on the building.
- Plant tall trees away from the south side of buildings. A tree too close to the building casts little shade in the summer but casts undesirable shadows in the winter.
- Select evergreen trees from the north side of buildings to protect from prevailing winds during winter.
- Plant trees or shrubs to shade central air conditioning units. It consumes less energy for cooling the same volume of air compared to a hot air conditioner.
- Plant tall growing species away from power lines.

For additional information regarding species selection it's recommended people contact local nurseries and university extension offices. Additional information can also be found at www.forestry.utah.gov/urbanforestry.php.

(more)

A research project conducted in 1998 showed that in the Salt Lake valley it is cool near bodies of water, along tree-lined roads, and areas of significant vegetation such as Liberty Park and the Salt Lake City County building. “Temperatures in these areas ranged from about 60 to 70 degrees,” said Perkins. “Compare that to vast asphalt parking lots that came in at 120 degrees and dark colored rooftops that hit a whopping 140 degrees, trees really do make a difference.”

Some might question planting woody species to reduce energy consumption due to the water they require. Utah is the second driest state in the nation. But, most officials in the plant and water industries agree that improper irrigation is the culprit. The amount of water consumed by plants is insignificant compared to the amount of water that ends up in sewers and gutters.

“By far, the most effective way to save water is to properly irrigate, not remove vegetation,” said Perkins. “The amount of water saved would be insignificant compared to the amount of energy consumed by not maintaining plants.”

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