

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Planet loses half of its trees

Trees have been growing on planet earth for millions of years.

By the time the human race evolved 200,000 years ago, there were 5.6 trillion trees, according to researchers at the Yale School of Forestry.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

Since then, humans have removed nearly half of them — and most of that has come in just the last 200 years.

Today, trees cover about a third of the earth's land mass.

But deforestation continues.

Each year, the planet loses about 45 million acres of trees, an area four times the size of New Jersey.

Researchers say that logging and other causes, such as wildfires and insects, cause the loss of about 15 billion trees a year. About 5 billion trees are replanted annually.

The loss of trees accelerates global warming. Trees absorb carbon dioxide, the leading greenhouse gas, before it enters the atmosphere.

Conversely, cutting and burning trees releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

Trees also absorb rainfall, allowing the water to seep into the earth, replenishing the water table. Without trees to block the sun and emit water vapor into the air, formerly forested areas can dry out and desertify.

Trees are also important in urban areas, where they can reduce storm-water runoff that pollutes waterways and causes flooding.

Urban trees also lower ambient temperatures, reducing the need for air conditioning.

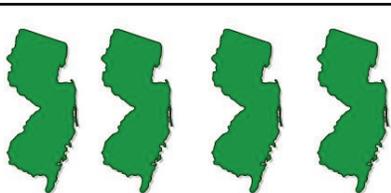
That's why many cities have started tree planting campaigns.

Washington, D.C., has set a goal of planting about 10,000 trees annually and has done so for the last five years.

New York City has planted 1 million trees in just the last eight years.

In Pottstown, unfortunately, we're going the other way. The borough has lost several hundred street trees in the last 10 years. It continues to cut down trees in Riverfront Park as it clears land on either side of the walking trails.

As part of Pottstown's new storm-water management plan, let's hope we start protecting and expanding our urban forest instead of removing it.



The world is losing about 45 million acres of trees annually, an area four times the size of New Jersey



TREE REMOVAL — Humans have cut down nearly half the trees on earth since the beginning of civilization. Most of that loss has occurred in the last 200 years, as the population has grown from 1 billion to 7 billion.