

The importance of tree canopies in the city

[Environment](#), [Plants](#)



Growing up, my parents religiously watched CBC News. To avoid living in a bubble, they were keen on staying informed about events happening all over the world. Naturally, as I got older, my interest in global issues become more prominent as well. Watching the news was a form of learning. Reporters covered a variety of topics ranging from the Gaza Strip conflict to the rise of Facebook.

Recently, I came across an article titled, “ The Impact that 2°C of Global Warming will have on the Planet” by Global News. The article outlines that due to inefficient use of material in production and waste mis-management, emissions are resulting in an increase in global temperature. Climate scientists predict that an increase of 2°C will result in irreversible damage. This includes a decrease in freshwater availability, rising sea levels, and extreme droughts. Therefore, if significant changes aren’t implemented immediately, these damages will come into effect in the next twelve years. I was fascinated by this article because it addressed the idea of doomsday from a different perspective. Instead of following the Mayan spiritual belief that the world will end on the last day of the calendar, the article provides scientific proof about how society’s actions are harmful in the long run to the place we call home. Twelve years is a short amount of time for 7.7 billion people to make a drastic change in their lifestyle choices. However, it needs to be done. This made me wonder about what I can do to be more proactive. After extensive research, I came across the effects of tree planting and lush tree canopies. Tree planting increases tree canopies which provides social, environmental, and economic benefits.

Firstly, it enhances the communities' quality of air and respiratory health by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and smog. A study conducted by The US Nature Conservancy found that tree canopies can reduce airborne particle matter by 7% to 24%. Secondly, lush tree canopies help manage rainfall and storm water runoff. This reduces the cost of infrastructure needed to manage sewer overflow and flooding during storms. Canopy, a non-profit organization focused on growing urban tree canopies in Midpeninsula found that the canopies in Palo Alto can intercept 135 million gallons of rainwater. This ultimately prevents the San Francisco Creek from flooding in the Spring. Lastly, tree canopies act as a natural air conditioner by releasing water vapour into the atmosphere. Canopy, also found that the evaporation from a single tree has the same cooling effect as a residential air conditioner operating 20 hours a day. Therefore, the temperature was 6-8 degrees lower in the summer when compared to neighbourhoods without trees. Ever since the industrial revolution, downtown Toronto has been excavated multiple times for real estate and construction purposes. This has stripped the area of a lot of its natural environment.

Therefore, I specifically chose to take part of a City of Toronto tree planting event. During the tree planting, we planted species that were native to the area. This included White Oak, Honey Locust, Tulip Tree and Freeman Maple. This was a rewarding experience. I hope to take part of a tree planting event once a month during the summer and spring seasons. Actively participating in tree planting is just one of the many lifestyle changes I can make to contribute to help rebuild our environment.