

The Value of Trees

There are many things to consider when trying to assess the value of your trees. Some you can put an estimated dollar figure on, others are more personal and will vary from individual to individual and from tree to tree. Replacement costs are one consideration, but it's often not feasible or even possible to replace mature trees in your yard. Tree spades can move specimens up to 35 feet tall or larger, but the expense is considerable and goes up in proportion to the size of the tree. A qualified appraiser for real estate purposes can assess the aesthetic value of your trees. An example, a house with a beautifully wooded back lot had a sales contract on it for \$310,000. The purchasers came by before settlement and discovered that the seller had removed a complete section of mature trees. They were furious and threatened to back out of the sale. They ended up settling for a price that was \$30,000 less than the original contract. An appraiser hired by the purchasers assessed this figure. Trees add other value beyond aesthetics:

- Erosion control: Roots help hold soil in place on hillsides.
- Noise reduction: A wide strip of dense trees can filter noise as much as 50 percent.
- Lower energy bills: Shade in the summer and wind reduction in the winter.
- Natural fence: Looks much better than the conventional kind screening out unpleasant sights.

The health benefits from improved air quality are also important. Trees remove pollutants such as carbon monoxide and sulfur dioxide. Improved air quality will reduce damage to buildings and add up to further savings. Studies have show that hospital patients with a view of trees out their window recover much faster and with fewer complications than similar patients without such views. It follows that you'll be happier in a house with a nice compliment of trees. If storm water runoff is a problem in your area, you should be aware that a tree with a modest canopy will reduce runoff by 12 percent, according to the September, 1992 issue of the Journal of Arboriculture. The larger the canopy, the higher the percentage. Surveys have found that most urban dwellers appreciate wildlife in their day-to-day lives. Trees provide habitat to a wide variety of living creatures, including birds and squirrels. Many communities have developed programs to enhance and preserve these habitats for the mutual enjoyment of all. Trees also help record the history of your property. If your father or grandfather planted an apple tree or a red oak many years ago, what is the sentimental value worth to you? Can you put a price on it? How about that maple you climbed as a kid? What are the memories worth? The Mid-Atlantic region is full of trees that are as old as the Union itself. Maybe you have one in your yard.

An I.S.A. Certified Arborist or a member of the American Society of Consulting Arborists, is trained to appraise trees. They can visit your property and provide you with a defensible appraisal. This will be based on the industry accepted I.S.A. method of appraising trees, along with the Texas Chapter's Species Rating Guide. There will usually be a charge for this expert opinion. Most properties with trees will have an increase in value of 5 to 15 percent when compared to properties without trees. Different studies show various figures depending on the species, maturity, quantity and location. The general consensus is, be good to your trees and they will be good to you. They're like money in the bank and their equity increases with time.