

GREEN

Little ^ Things Mean a Lot

YOU Can Make a Difference – One tree at a time!

*by Michele Benesh
written for Brodhead Free Press*

What a fantastic (and Green!) opportunity we have! The Brodhead Forestry/Native Lawns Committee, which is fortunate enough to have four certified Master Gardeners among their enthusiastic members, is sponsoring an Arbor Day Celebration and YOU can benefit if you live in Brodhead. All Brodhead residents received, in a mailing with their tax bills, a flyer about the Terrace Tree Planting project – hopefully you didn't throw yours away! If you did, you can pick one up at City Hall. If you have a space on your terrace that can accommodate a tree, this group will order, deliver, and even plant your tree! All you have to do is pay the small cost of the tree, which ranges from \$30 to \$50 depending on the species you choose. This is a fantastic bargain, as these are not twigs, but 6 to 8 foot trees. There are seven different species of trees available, some with great displays of flowers and fall color, but ACT NOW – the forms must be turned in to the City Clerk's office by February 25th.

There are many reasons for such a celebration, but I think it was prompted largely by the Emerald Ash Borer. "Say what?" you may be asking. Flash back a few decades and those of you old enough will remember Dutch Elm Disease. That was when our lawns and terraces were populated with huge, beautiful elm trees, and they all died from this disease, leaving gaping holes everywhere and depriving us of their cool shade. In our infinite wisdom, we replaced many, if not most, of the elm trees with ash trees. Brodhead's terraces and lawns are gorgeous in the fall when these ash trees display their fantastic colors of purple, red, and orange. Unfortunately, the Emerald Ash Borer is on its way. It will be the next Dutch Elm Disease and will kill all the ash trees that have not been treated, which is a prohibitively expensive process. You have probably seen some "big blue boxes" hanging in trees the past year or so – these are traps that will let officials know when they arrive. So far none have been found in Green or Rock counties, but they are in Walworth County and in Illinois' Winnebago County, so it's just a matter of a short time.

Fortunately we have learned from past mistakes and are planting a wide variety of trees so that the next bug to come along will not wipe out huge numbers. The city has done a survey of every tree on city property and is in the process of mapping each and every one of them so that a perpetual inventory can be maintained whenever a tree is added or removed. It was a huge undertaking, to be sure! In addition, the City is in the process of qualifying to be designated a "Tree City USA" According to the website of the National Arbor Day Foundation, "Every community, regardless of size, benefits in different ways from being a Tree City USA. Being a Tree City USA helps present the kind of image that most citizens want to have for the place they live or conduct business. The Tree City

USA signs at community entrances tell visitors that here is a community that cares about its environment. The designation touches the lives of people within the community who benefit daily from cleaner air, shadier streets, and aesthetic beauty that healthy, well-managed urban forests provide.”

Rich Vogel, who enthusiastically heads the Forestry /Native Lawns Committee, spoke to the Optimist Club recently to tell us about this Arbor Day project as well as to inform us about the many benefits of trees. Being a huge fan of statistics, I will share some of them with you – they are very impressive! According to a pamphlet from the US Department of Agriculture entitled *Trees Pay us Back*, “Landscape trees provide benefits that far exceed the costs of planting and care over their lifetime. Environmental and aesthetic benefits, such as energy savings, stormwater runoff reduction, cleaner air, and higher property values, are an average of three times greater than tree care costs. The greatest benefits are energy savings and higher property values.”

All of the following statistics are the result of documented scientific studies:

- One hundred trees remove 53 tons of carbon dioxide and 430 pounds of other air pollutants per year.
- Tree-filled neighborhoods lower levels of domestic violence and are safer and more sociable.
- One hundred mature trees catch about 139,000 gallons of rainwater per year.
- Strategically placed trees save up to 56% on annual air-conditioning costs, and evergreens that block winter winds can save 3% on heating.
- In tree-lined commercial districts, shoppers report more frequent shopping, longer shopping trips, willingness to pay more for parking, and willingness to pay 12% more for goods.
- Each large front yard tree adds 1% to the house sales price, and large specimen trees can add 10% to property value!

Coincidentally, the new movie about trees, “The Lorax” is coming out in March – that has always been by far my favorite Dr. Seuss book, so I can’t wait to see it. You can see a preview on www.theloraxmovie.com, and click on a link there to The Lorax Project. That site has all kinds of activities that have to do with trees and conservation as well as tons of information about forests and the animals that depend on them. I urge you to check it out, and to plant a tree (or two, or three).