

Plant Trees for a Beautiful Future

Written by Laura Lee Rose

Tuesday, 05 February 2019 11:10 - Last Updated Wednesday, 06 February 2019 06:38



Trees native to the southeastern United States provide the essentials for wildlife – food, cover, affordable housing, nesting materials – and they promote species diversity. They also give wonderful interest and texture to home landscapes.

Having species diversity is important in keeping populations of plants and animals healthy; resistance to disease, size, color, flavor, blooming times are inherited traits. The canopies provide twigs, leaves and Spanish moss that will be used for nests. Nuts, acorns, seeds and berries provide the fats, proteins, and carbohydrates that nourish animals. The leaves and other plant parts are hosts for many species of insects and invertebrates that will feed reptiles, amphibians, baby birds, and mammals. Leaf litter and soil are alive with microorganisms, earthworms, and subterranean critters that are such an important part of the food web. Decomposers digest organic matter and turn it into humus. Humus acts like a sponge holding water and nutrients and, in time, releasing them. Trees provide shade, the roots hold soil and prevent erosion, and, best of all, plants make their own food (photosynthesis), turning carbon dioxide and water into carbohydrates, and give up oxygen as a by-product.

Fall and winter are the best time to plant trees and woody shrubs. Native trees provide

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