

Save energy by turning to Mother Nature

A few improvements can be concentrated outdoors this season. While homeowners are cleaning up the property or inspecting their home's exterior, they may want to consider adding some trees and shrubbery that can save them money down the line.

Most individuals are tightening their belts and watching spending these days. High numbers of layoffs and increasing unemployment numbers are indicative of troubled times. But while income has decreased, the cost of living certainly has not. Energy costs still remain high, and many homeowners are looking for ways to cut spending any way they can around the home.

There is something relatively easy homeowners can do to reduce the financial burden of energy costs --get planting. Choosing the right types of trees and shrubs can offset heating and cooling costs all year long.

Just think how a towering shade tree dramatically cools an area when the sun is high in the sky and can be a welcome solace on a hot day. A hedge of thick evergreen bushes may serve as a windblock when the weather is blustery. Incorporating these elements into a landscape can be a natural and

inexpensive way to cut costs.

Before planting, homeowners should first answer a few questions.

- * What direction does my house face?
- * What areas of the house have the most windows?
- * What climate do I live in? Are four seasons experienced?
- * What is my planting "zone"?
- * Are there any rules and regulations regarding planting shrubbery or trees around my home?

Answering these questions can help homeowners decide on what plants will be right for their home needs. For example, individuals who live in primarily hot climates should understand that nearly 75 percent of all solar heat gain in a building comes through windows. Therefore, shading the south- and west-facing windows of the home with trees can dramatically reduce reliance on cooling systems. Keeping an air conditioner unit shaded can also improve its efficiency.

Homeowners who experience the highs and lows of all seasons will want to consider deciduous trees. These are trees that lose their leaves in cold weather. Deciduous trees will block the sun during the summer, but then let the light in the winter to warm up the interior.

If a home is routinely under attack by blustery winds, thick shrubs planted for windbreaking are ideal. These include firs and junipers, and other evergreens. They should be planted perpendicular to the winds for maximum blockage. Shrubs planted on the northeast side of the home may protect the home from storms that tend to roll in from this direction. Do not plant evergreens where sunlight is desired, otherwise the thermostat may need to be turned up to compensate.

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\$587,000, 6 Bedrooms, 3.5 Baths, Margo Teeter
304.419.1919 oldcolony.com/124648.ad

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\$459,900, 4 Bedrooms, 4.5 Baths, Denise Stricklen
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Charleston 12 Jamestown 2:00-4:00 PM
\$585,000, 6 Bedrooms, 4 Baths, Lynn Ugland
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Charleston 1410 Somerlayton 2:00-4:00 PM
\$329,000, 4 Bedrooms, 2.5 Baths, Vickie McLaughlin
304.415.0366 oldcolony.com/125402.ad

Charleston 1407 Lee Street, East 2:00-4:00 PM
\$147,000, 4 Bedrooms, 1.5 Baths, Jackie Zakaib
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South Charleston 140 Ruthlawn 2:00-4:00 PM
\$239,000, 5 Bedrooms, 3.5 Baths, John Simpson
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\$390,000, 5 Bedrooms, 3.5 Baths, Deborah Hill
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\$264,700, 4 Bedrooms, 3.5 Baths, Asha Bachhawatt
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\$206,000, 4 Bedrooms, 2.5 Baths, Natalie 304.419.2020
Edna 304.561.5691 oldcolony.com/125138.ad

Hurricane 7 Poplar Hills 2:00-4:00 PM
\$209,000, 3 Bedrooms, 2.5 Baths, Drema Davis
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