

TREES AND HUMANITY

“The symbolism – and the substantive significance – of planting a tree has universal power in every culture and every society on Earth, and it is a way for individual men, women and children to participate in creating solutions for the environmental crisis.”

Al Gore, Earth in the Balance

Forests provide not only environmental protection, but also significant income and livelihood options globally for more than one billion forest-dependent people.

Trees provide a wide range of products (timber, fruit, medicine, beverages, fodder) and services (carbon sequestration, shade, beautification, erosion control, soil fertility). Without trees human life would be unsustainable.

Forests also play an important cultural, spiritual and recreational role in many societies. In some cases, they are integral to the very definition and survival of indigenous and traditional cultures.

Forests and trees are symbolically important in most of the world's major religions. Trees symbolize historical continuity, they link earth and heavens and, to many traditions, are home to both good and bad spirits and the souls of ancestors.

Forests also play an important role in offering recreational opportunities and spiritual solace in modern societies. They are universally powerful symbols, a physical expression of life, growth and vigour to urban, rural and forest dwellers alike. Medicinal products from trees help to cure diseases and increase fertility. Trees preside over community discussions and marriages. They are planted at the birth of a child and at burial sites.



If you are thinking a year ahead, sow a seed.
If you are thinking ten years ahead, plant a tree.
Chinese poet, 500 BC

He who plants a tree loves others beside himself.
English proverb

The best friend on Earth of man is the tree. When we use the tree respectfully and economically, we have one of the greatest resources of the Earth.
Frank Lloyd Wright

They are beautiful in their peace; they are wise in their silence. They will stand after we are dust. They teach us, and we tend them.
Galeain ip Altiem MacDunelmor

Though a tree grows so high, the falling leaves return to the root.
Malay proverb

A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in.
Greek proverb

Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree.
Martin Luther

The great French Marshall Lyautey once asked his gardener to plant a tree. The gardener objected that the tree was slow growing and would not reach maturity for 100 years. The Marshall replied, 'In that case, there is no time to lose; plant it this afternoon!'
John F. Kennedy

Trees are poems that Earth writes upon the sky. We fell them down and turn them into paper, that we may record our emptiness.
Kahlil Gibran

If what I say resonates with you, it is merely because we are both branches on the same tree.
W. B. Yeats

A tree is our most intimate contact with nature.
George Nakashima, woodworker

A tree uses what comes its way to nurture itself. By sinking its roots deeply into the earth, by accepting the rain that flows towards it, by reaching out to the sun, the tree perfects its character and becomes great. ... Absorb, absorb, absorb. That is the secret of the tree.
Deng Ming-Dao, Everyday Tao

Plant trees. They give us two of the most crucial elements for our survival: oxygen and books.
A. Whitney Brown

Each generation takes the Earth as trustees. We ought to bequeath to posterity as many forests and orchards as we have exhausted and consumed.
J. Sterling Morton

To me, nature is sacred; trees are my temples and forests are my cathedrals.
Mikhail Gorbachev

God has cared for these trees, saved them from drought, disease, avalanches, and a thousand tempests and floods. But he cannot save them from fools.
John Muir

The forest is a peculiar organism of unlimited kindness and benevolence that makes no demands for its sustenance and extends generously the products of its life and activity; it affords protection to all beings.
Buddhist Sutra

People who will not sustain trees will soon live in a world which cannot sustain people.
Bryce Nelson

Reforestation of the earth is possible, given a human touch.
Sandra Postel and Lori Heise, Worldwatch Institute

