Plant trees, build shade for your health and the environment

Natural shade from trees provides many health and environmental benefits. When we plant trees and build shade we are helping clean the air, reduce summer heat, conserve energy, and provide protection from the sun to help prevent skin cancer and heat-related illness.

Spaces such as forests, parks with trees, built shade structures (such as gazebos, awnings and pergolas) or shaded back yards, provide areas to relax and enjoy nature. They also offer protection from ultraviolet (UV) rays and summer heat – and are great places to be physically active.

Trees improve:

Air quality
Water quality and quantity
Migratory bird habitat
Carbon sequestration
Mental health and well-being
Community cohesion
Outdoor recreation and physical activity
Stormwater interception
Local biological diversity
Natural shade and UV Ray protection

Trees reduce:

Risk of developing chronic diseases
Flood risk
Urban heat island effects
Air borne pollutants
Climate change
Energy consumption

Planning for shade at home

For shade to be effective, it needs to be comfortable, easy to use and accessible, provide protection at the right time of the day and at the right time of the year. Involve your family in the shade planning process and start by conducting a shade audit on your outdoor space to identify existing shade areas and determine where additional shade is needed.

Here are some questions to help get you started:

- What features are in your space? What are the ground surfaces? Do you have a deck, patio, children's play or pool area?
- What outdoor space areas have shade during the day? How much shade is provided at different times of the day – especially the morning, mid-day and mid-afternoon?
- Do the areas you use most provide enough shade throughout the day?

Remember: surfaces such as concrete, pavement, sand or water will reflect higher levels of UV radiation and trap more heat than surfaces such as grass, wood or soil.

The following trees are well suited to the climate and environment of York Region: Red Maple, Sugar Maple, Silver Maple, Freeman Maple, Ohio Buckeye, Honey Locust, White Oak, Bur Oak, Red Oak, Swamp White Oak, Basswood, Black Walnut, Hackberry, Ironwood, Kentucky Coffee Tree.

Check with your local municipality to ensure that your activities will comply with applicable local bylaws and, if required, obtain necessary permits. Give consideration to any underground cables or lines and ensure accessible emergency or access routes for safety purposes.
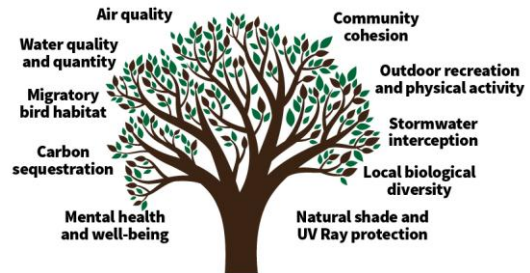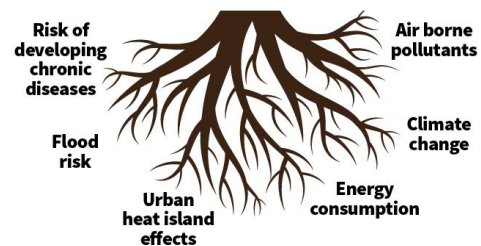
## Conducting your own shade audit

Example:

1. Draw your backyard in the box below. Include your house, patio, deck, children's play areas, pool areas, trees, large shrubs or hedges and any built shade structures.
2. Determine activity patterns in your yard.
3. Note the ground surfaces such as grass, concrete or wood.
4. Draw in areas that get shade during the day.
5. Compare your activity patterns and current shade to determine where more is required.

Legend:

🟩	Shade 7am - 1pm
🟦	Shade 1pm - 3pm
🟨	Shade 3pm - 7pm
🟥	Areas to add natural or built shade
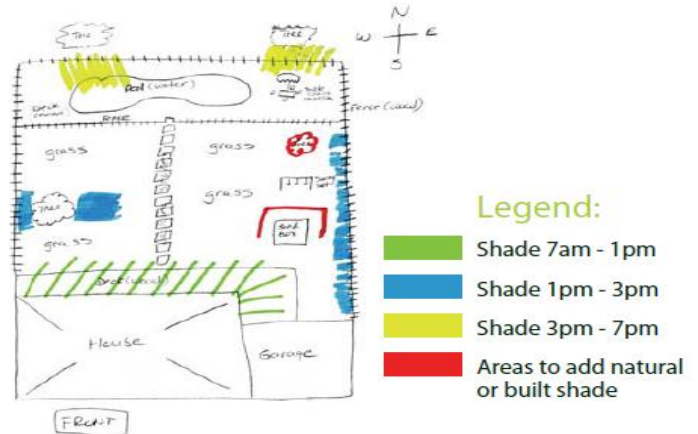
Draw here:

For more information on specific trees, consult with **Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests (LEAF)**, your local nursery, landscape architect or arborist.

LEAF offers subsidized tree planting services for York Region residents. To learn more, please visit www.yourleaf.org or call 1-888-453-6504.