National Arbor Week

The history of Arbor Week

The idea for Arbor Day originally came from Nebraska. When John G. Shober, who died today one would not find evidence that the area was once a treeless plain. Yet it was the lack of trees there that led to the founding of Arbor Day in the 1800s. Among the pioneers moving into the Nebraska territory in 1842 was J. Sterling Morton from Detroit. He and his wife were nature lovers, and the home they established in Nebraska was quickly planted with trees, shrubs and flowers.

Morton not only advocated tree planting by individuals in his articles and editorials, but he also encouraged civic organizations and groups to join in his prominence in the area increased and he became secretary of the Nebraska territory, which provided another opportunity to stress the value of trees. Arbor Day in South Africa

Historically, South Africa has not had a culture of tree planting and it was not until the 1970s that a real need to promote tree planting was recognized. The concept of a National Arbor Day was first suggested in 1973 by a Green Heritage Campaign.

The campaign has evolved into a major event that established major publicity and public participation throughout South Africa. The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is the custodian of Arbor Day and the function in South Africa and as such is responsible for the coordination of the Arbor Week Campaign.

This function takes place at local government level, therefore it is undertaken in partnership with local government institutions, non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations.

The idea is to highlight the opportunities for sustainable economic development, community participation, poverty alleviation and job creation in Forestry, thereby contributing towards growth, development and a better life for all.

Objectives of Greening and Arbor Week in the Country

Greening refers to an integrated approach to the planting, care and management of all vegetation in urban and rural areas to secure multiple benefits for communities.

Greening in the South African context takes place in towns, townsships and informal settlements. It is a new type of greening that was previously disadvantaged areas were not catered for in terms of planting for parks as part of street trees in open spaces.

Arbor Week affords the department and other stakeholders the opportunity to undertake a major national awareness programme regarding the value of trees in our communities, whilst increasing awareness of tree species that are threatened by extinction.

The theme for the 2015 Arbor Week Campaign is Forests and People: Investing in a sustainable Africa

The campaign promotes awareness for the need to plant and maintain indigenous trees throughout South Africa, especially for the many disadvantaged communities who often live in barren and water-stressed areas.

It further extremises:

• Raise awareness of South Africa’s urban and rural greening initiatives.
• Promote a better understanding of trees, and their role in contributing to human wellbeing.
• Highlight the importance of trees that play in the sustainable development and environmental security of people’s lives.
• Highlight the role of trees in creating employment, especially in rural areas.
• Highlight the role of fruit trees in addressing food security when integrated with other programmes.
• Encourage communities to participate in various greening activities within their own surroundings.

Role of forests in climate change and food security

It is well recognized that the world’s forests offer a multitude of benefits, from sustainable commercial industries, providing livelihoods and natural resources and conserving biodiversity.

As a result of factors such as population growth, globalisation and climate change, deforestation is one of the key causes of raising carbon dioxide levels under threat, resulting in loss of forest land, land degradation and desertification.

Our natural resources play a key role in ensuring social, environmental and economic sustainability, combating the negative impact, strengthening food security, addressing climate change and poor control over their destiny and increasing fertility and maintaining soil moisture. Tree fodder is furthermore important in cattle breeding.

Secondly, by providing economic and employment opportunities mainly through timber harvesting, but also representing a valuable source of income for agricultural producers in the times of agricultural crises through forest-based small-scale industries and other rural enterprises.

Logging behind population growth. Total forest production in Africa grows at the rate of 2% a year, whereas population growth at a rate of 2.5% and the demand for forest products, according to the UNCCD, more than 5 billion hectares were affected by one or another form of land degradation, which is more than 40% of the agricultural land in Africa.

Environmentally unsafe use of forests and deforestation of forest ecosystems significantly contributes to the raise in food insecurity. There are three main ways in which forests and forest ecosystems are related to food security:

• Firstly, by providing favourable conditions for agricultural activities by preventing soil erosion, increasing fertility and maintaining soil moisture. Tree fodder is furthermore important in cattle breeding.

• Secondly, by providing economic and employment opportunities mainly through timber harvesting, but also representing a valuable source of income for agricultural producers in the times of agricultural crises through forest-based small-scale industries and other rural enterprises.

• And thirdly, by providing food during food shortages in the form of non-timber forest products.

Agriculture practices, based on the integration of often threatened trees and crops. Trees for food and livestock, provide an interdisciplinary integrated way to the sustainable use of forests and the development of land degradation and improving food security.

This includes, among other things, integration of tree biomass as manure, increasing shade on improved pasture, yields of non-food wood, non-timber and construction materials, watershed management, use of multifunctional trees and trade and marketing of forest products.

Trees of the year and the importance of planting single trees

Every Arbor Week celebration highlights two or three specific trees. The trees are selected from commonly found trees species and are named after local heroes. For the 2015 following two tree species have been selected as trees of the year: 1. Heteromorpha arboricans: 2. Combretum kraussii:

Bushwillow

The aim is to encourage people to plant trees at various places so that they are not lost to us and future generations. These tree species are the source of income for our society. They serve various purposes in our lives and in those of other living organisms.

They provide an important habitat for the survival of bird, animal and insect species. Our indigenous trees also play an important role in attracting tourists to South Africa.

The following are some of the benefits derived from trees:

• Trees benefit our lives, we may consider a number of products derived from trees such as wood (e.g. furniture, paper, fibre, oils, gums, synops, pharmaceutical products, fruit and nuts. Trees provide much more than just products, providing aesthetic beauty; they offer an almost endless list of environmental and economic benefits, some of which are crucial to our well-being.

• Wood produces oxygen while breaking down carbon dioxide. Scientists contend that the abundance of carbon dioxide in the Earth’s atmosphere will lead to the greenhouse effect. Smog can be filtered by trees, as well as dust, and organic debris can be trapped by a tree’s foliage.

• Soil is conserved by trees; falling leaves and needles decompose, providing rich nutrients to the soil. Trees of crops prevent soil erosion and tree canopies reduce flooding and soil erosion.

• A tree’s various parts absorb sounds, deflect the waves in different directions, and thereby reduce the sound’s intensity. Properly placed evergreen trees act as a windbreak and an insulator. In the winter, this can translate into lower costs of home heating. In summer deciduous trees will. If strategically placed, provide shade to a home’s roof and outside walls, helping to reduce air-conditioning costs.

• Property values are enhanced by the presence of attractive and well-kept trees around a home and its surroundings, which can increase property values. Trees provide shade, reducing utility costs and increasing property values.

• Trees are a valuable resource, providing both environmental and economic benefits. By planting even a single tree, eventually a million trees the country can make a difference.

Events, posters and leaflets can be found at www.naaw.co.za National ArborWeek 2015 Trees of the year

Alternatively, you can contact:

National Arbor Week

The focus is on the prevention and combating of uncontrolled wild fires and the practical implementation of the Fire Protection Act.

National Arbor Week

This is an initiative aimed at encouraging communities and individuals to plant trees in memory of their loved ones and individuals who contributed to community development and nation building.

World Arbor Week

1 - 7 September 2015

National Arbor Week