

Opinion: Important to recognize what trees do

By Daniel Berlant

Trees are an essential part of California's climate and are vital to improving the state's air quality and conserving water. To help educate Californians on the value that trees provide to building successful, healthy cities and neighborhoods, California is celebrating March 7-14 as California Arbor Week.

CalFire is partnering with California ReLeaf to encourage cities, nature groups, schools, and youth organizations to celebrate California Arbor Week by planting trees in their communities. California ReLeaf is an alliance of community-based groups, individuals, businesses, and government agencies working to protect the environment by planting and caring for trees and the state's urban and community forests.

"Trees offer so many more benefits than what we see," said CalFire Deputy Director Bill Snyder. "Their importance to the environment, climate, economy and the overall well-being of California is critical."

Research shows that trees clear pollution from the air, catch significant amounts of rainwater, add to property values, cut energy use, increase commercial activity, reduce stress, improve neighborhood safety and enhance recreation opportunities.

"Trees make California's cities and towns better. It's that simple," said Joe Liszewski, executive director for California ReLeaf. "Everyone can do their part to plant and care for trees, ensuring that they are a resource long into the future."

The goals of Arbor Week include educating Californians about trees, encouraging tree planting, teaching elementary school children the environmental, social, and economic benefits of trees, and protecting the state's valuable natural resources.

As part of the department's mission, CalFire is charged with protecting California's forests by maintaining the sustainability of the state's natural resources including both urban and wildland forests. CalFire is encouraging everyone to be a part of California Arbor Week by planting a tree. It's important that you carefully plan before you plant a tree to ensure that your tree is properly placed to avoid growing into powerlines and buildings. Get more planting tips on the CalFire website.

Daniel Berlant works for CalFire.