DIVISION OF
AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES
AND NATURAL RESOURCES
NEWS RELEASE

Plants can do what?

Plants do so much more than just look pretty. When driving around any city or suburb, take the time to look at the urban gardens and landscapes. While they add beauty and visual interest to the area, the plantings also have a greater purpose.

Cities and suburbs with tree-lined streets can benefit from reduced ambient temperatures by as much as 5.5 degrees Fahrenheit. In addition, these same trees can provide habitat and food for wildlife.

Did you know plants can help with cleaner water? Plants growing in a raingarden or bioswale reduce nutrient pollution into watersheds by as much as 13 to 15 pounds of pollutants per year. This is something from which everyone in the area will benefit.

You've probably seen photographs on the news of big cities that seem to always feature a hazy or cloudy look. Urban street trees can help lower air pollutants such as ozone in those heavily populated areas.

Trees are also important due to the aesthetics they provide. A city, town or community full of mature trees is more enticing to homebuyers and businesses looking to relocate. There can be a big economic impact.

Bird watching is a popular leisure activity for all ages. Native trees in residential yards can help sustain native bird populations in metropolitan areas. There are many different species of birds, all featuring beautiful colored feathers, which are interesting to look at closely. Add in a bird bath or another water feature if you want to see the bird frolicking in the water. It also provides a good source of hydration for these feathered friends.

Plants also can reduce water run-off. In New York City, plants growing in raised beds help slow the flow of 12 million gallons of stormwater every year. Think about what that could do in your area.

Flooding isn't an issue in Oklahoma right now, but when the state does receive rain, stormwater surges can be reduced by raingardens by preventing flooding. Raingardens can retain up to 75% of stormwater surge following a heavy rain event.

One of the best things about urban gardens and landscapes is they are bee boosters. We all know the importance of bees and their pollination efforts. Densely populated cities can benefit greatly from bees, as long as neighborhoods in the city have lots of gardens and green plants.