

# WE NEED A NATIONAL ARBOR DAY

by Harry J. Banker

Over a hundred years ago, J. Sterling Morton succeeded in securing the support of the Governor and Legislature in Nebraska to establish the first official Arbor Day observance in America (1872). Since that date, many other states also passed legislation establishing Arbor Day observances on various dates in almost every month of the year. Today, there are less than a handful of states which do not have an Arbor Day date which is observed by schools, service clubs and civic groups, as well as Arboricultural, Horticultural and Agricultural organizations.

However, over the years the observance of Arbor Day has experienced a rather rollercoaster kind of success. Interest in this important observance would rise and fall as politics changed. If the leaders in the various branches of state government were conservation-minded or concerned with the environment, Arbor Day observances were widespread and the conservation and protection of our trees were properly considered in the preparation of state, county and municipal budgets. Also, good shade tree laws were drafted, passed and seriously administered. However, when the political winds blew from the opposite direction, interest in statewide Arbor Day observances waned, and more often than not tree care budgets at state, county and municipal levels were cut drastically.

Fortunately, however, many arborists organizations,, garden clubs, nursery and forestry associations persisted in developing annual Arbor Day tree planting and educational programs. Many of these Arbor Day observances also included the display of excellent conservation and environmental posters by students of every age on the need to protect and preserve our trees as one of our most important natural resources. Undoubtedly, these observances, posters and the many pieces of educational literature distributed by these organizations did much to reawaken the interest in trees and Arbor Day programs in recent years.

Early in the 1940's and 50's, the late Edward H. Scanlon — a noted municipal arborist and publisher of the Journal of Arboriculture known as TREES, a magazine distributed nationally — formed the Committee for a National Arbor Day. This Committee, under its able National Chairman, soon established State Chairmen in the East and Midwest. By 1949, five states — South Dakota, Massachusetts, Utah, Connecticut and New Jersey — had passed legislation to observe the Last Friday in April as their official Arbor Day date.

Today, 24 states observe the Last Friday in April as Arbor Day to coincide with the National Arbor Day Committee's objective of securing the passage of Federal legislation permanently establishing the Last Friday in April as National Arbor Day. The Committee has already been successful in securing passage of Congressional bills in 1970 and 1972, which authorized the President of the United States to proclaim the Last Friday in April as National Arbor Day for these two years.

However, despite the successful passage of these two National Arbor Day bills in 1970 and 1972, there is continued and unjustified resistance by Sub-Committee Chairmen in the Senate and the House toward releasing the permanent National Arbor Day bills from their respective Committees. Nevertheless, we feel with continued public and organizational support, these bills will be passed.

Most people, when thinking about the value of trees, readily associate them with home building, furniture, fencing, railroad ties, etc. However, these forest products stretch far beyond these few obvious items. Actually, there are more than 5000 that contribute to our standard of living. Many of these products are made of paper of which we use a tremendous amount: approximately 500 lbs. per person annually. Of even greater importance to our physical and mental wellbeing is the contribution made by trees toward neutralizing the atmospheric pollution caused by man.

Let me quote from a 1972 letter by David G. Leach, then President of the American Horticultural Society, to Congressman John William Stanton of Virginia, urging the passage of the National Arbor Day legislation H.J. Res. 563.

"Many people unthinkingly tend to associate Arbor Day with the little red schoolhouse and the quaint customs of another day, when Arbor Day is now more important to our welfare than ever before. As the population explodes, over 1,000,000 acres of the green and growing are paved with masonry, concrete or asphalt every year. About 78 trees are needed to absorb the carbon dioxide and produce the oxygen needed to maintain the balance in the atmosphere for every single person in the United States. Twenty trees are required to offset the effect of a car driven 60 miles in one day. More than 100,000 trees are needed to cancel the atmospheric pollution of just one commercial jet traveling each day round trip between New York and Los Angeles. New York City, which should have 78 trees for each person, has ¼ tree per person! Israel, aware of the growing menace, has planted 100,000,000 trees to reforest mountains which have been barren for 2,000 years. The preservation of trees and plants, may be literally a matter of survival."

Concerning noise pollution, an Ohio Forestry Association publication points out that "Each 100 foot width of trees can absorb about 6 to 8 decibels of sound intensity. Properly planted

trees can absorb enough traffic noise to make living nearby bearable. Around airports, trees can be effective to lower the noise of aircraft."

For too long have adult Americans primarily considered the observance of Arbor Day as strictly an activity by elementary school children. While Arbor Day programs by school children are still an important educational experience for young Americans who one day may be our Senators, Congressmen and even our President, it is vitally necessary that adult Americans and their organizations such as Rotary International get even more involved in the preservation and protection of our nation's trees in cities and towns, as well as in our open lands and forests. This can best be done by urging Congress and the President to establish a national observance of Arbor Day on the Last Friday in April. The unified observance of Arbor Day on this day nationally utilizing all the mediums of communication — T.V., radio, newspapers and magazines — as well as the planting of trees in great numbers or the symbolical planting of a single tree, will have a tremendous educational impact on young and old alike of the value and importance of trees to our way of life.

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## ABSTRACT

Kemmer, Harleigh. 1976. Managing outdoor lighting. *Grounds Maintenance* 11(9): 14, 16, 20.

Outdoor lighting extends the time available for play and other activities normally limited to daylight hours. Night lighting also provides security, safety, and creates interesting night scenes by accenting plants, walls, signs, pieces of sculpture, and other noteworthy features in the landscape. Design of lighting systems is generally done by electrical engineers. Installation and repair of the electrical components is handled by electricians and electrical contractors. The grounds manager becomes involved with the following activities: 1. Maintaining poles and other hardware. 2. Keeping tree and shrub branches from obstructing lights. 3. Protecting root systems of desirable trees and shrubs when wires are installed underground. 4. Checking for damage to plants. (Light affects the growth of some plants.) 5. Pruning or removing plants when security becomes a problem.