APRIL 2021 COMMKIT – SAFETY

**Plant trees to save energy**

By [CO-OP EMPLOYEE] and Pat Keegan

When homeowners look for opportunities to improve efficiency, they frequently look inside. You should also consider how projects outside your home can impact energy use. Spring landscape projects can have a major impact on your home’s efficiency.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, shading your home is the most cost-effective way to reduce heat gain from the sun and reduce your air conditioning costs in the summer. Having more plants and trees in your yard can reduce the air temperature by up to 6 degrees.

Planting deciduous trees on the south, southwest and west sides of your home can cut heating during hot summer months while allowing sunlight through during the fall and winter when the trees have lost their leaves. When planting trees, consider the expected shape and height of the mature trees and where they will shade your home. A tree with a high mature height planted on the south side of a home, for example, will provide all-day roof shading in the summer while a shorter tree to the west can protect your home from the lower afternoon sun.

If your home is in an open area without many structures around it, cold winter winds can increase your heating bills. A windbreak on your property can help deflect these winds over your home. The most common type of windbreak uses a combination of evergreen trees and shrubs to block wind from the ground to the top of your home. For the best windbreak effect, plant these features on the north and northwest sides of your home at a distance of between two and five times the height of the mature trees. Incorporating a wall or fence can further assist with the wind break.

There are a few safety tips to consider when planting trees. Contact [CO-OP NAME] before planting trees near power lines. We can recommend safe planting distances based on the type of tree. You should also call 811 before digging to avoid underground utilities on your property.

The goal of most lawn and garden projects is to bring beauty to your outdoor space, but a well-designed project can also improve your energy bill and increase the overall value of your home.

Cutline: *Deciduous trees on the south and west sides of your home can shade it from the hot summer sun. Photo Credit: Alan Davey*