

Address by the Executive Mayor during Arbor Week Held in Masilonyana Local Municipality, Soutpan

The Mayor of Masilonyana Municipality

Speaker of Masilonyana Municipality

Chief Whip

Councillors

Municipal Manager

Officials from DWAF

Officials from the Masilonyana Municipality

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me thank the Mayor of Masilonyana for having invited me in this important event that attempts to make a call to all our people about the importance of trees in our communities. The government encourages the planting and caring of trees due to a number of reasons that will be discussed later in the speech. This event is not meant to promote the Western ideas or beliefs or anyone's ideas but is about natural realities.

Our communities have been made to be deserts where you cannot find trees and other natural realities that make our townships to be environmentally healthy. We were made to believe that trees are dangerous to live with in our yards hence many of our people chop them down. It is high time that our people are told of all these benefits about natural life.

A day like this is a good opportunity to highlight an issue that is arguably the biggest and most imminent threat to mankind today - global warming. I am not going to expand on all the scientific evidence that is available that proves that global warming is occurring, or that the effects of it are already apparent. Nor will I discuss the various species that have already become extinct, and that many more will become extinct in our lifetime. But suffice it to say that it is incumbent on all of us to help solve this problem. A solution to this scientific argument is the one that we are embarking upon today and trying to address.

We hope that planting these indigenous trees will be symbolic of our combined efforts to secure the future for our children.

The celebration of Arbor Day gives you an opportunity to learn about trees and take positive action to make the world a better place. Here is a quick list of reasons trees are so important to us all:

- Trees provide shade to keep us and our homes cool on hot summer days
- Trees give off vital oxygen through photosynthesis which you and I and animals need to breathe.
- Trees absorb harmful pollutants and small particles from the air which could damage our lungs.
- Trees provide protection from the wind.
- Trees reduce noise pollution.
- Trees give us products such as: chewing gum, crayons, soap, shatterproof glass, suntan lotion, cork, dyes, life-saving drugs, writing paper, syrup, perfume, pencils, firewood, building materials, and much more.
- Trees provide a home and food for wildlife
- Rotting logs and leaves eventually turn into soil and put nutrients back into the soil for other plants to grow.
- Trees are beautiful to look at, nice to listen to as leaves rustle in the breeze, fun to explore, exciting to climb, and great to dream under.

Celebrating Arbor Day is important because it helps make everyone aware that we need to take care of our trees, so they can take care of us.

Environmental Benefits of Urban Trees

Trees provide Cleaner, Cooler Air: In exchange for giving oxygen, trees absorb carbon dioxide produced from the combustion of various fuels. Trees remove or trap lung-damaging dust, ash, pollen and smoke from the air, in addition to providing shade for people and conserving energy and provide a positive impact on human health.

Scientists tell us that one acre of trees produces enough oxygen for 18 people every day. For the benefit of human health, trees are necessary and a natural resource which we cannot live without.

Cleaner Water: Trees also act as natural water filters and help significantly slow the movement of storm water, which lowers total runoff volume, soil erosion and flooding. From an economic viewpoint, communities that utilize this important function of trees and canopy cover may spend less money developing additional stormwater management infrastructure.

Economic Benefits of Trees

Increased business value: Recent research reveals that trees enhance community economic stability by attracting businesses and tourists

- Tree-lined business and retail districts encourage patrons to linger and shop longer.

Increased home value: The presence of trees has a positive effect on occupancy rates and residential home sales. Neighborhood greenspaces or greenways typically increase the value of properties located nearby.

Greenspace and shaded sidewalks encourage outdoor activity.

Lower infrastructure costs: The presence of trees in a community affect the cost of municipal services such as stormwater control, transportation and air quality. For instance, trees act as natural water filters and help significantly slow the movement of stormwater, which lowers total runoff volume, soil erosion and flooding.

Health Benefits of Urban Trees

Studies have found a correlation between community forests and the average amount of physical activity exerted by neighborhood residents. People are more inclined to get outdoors and exercise when their surroundings are greener. Logically, greater physical activity leads to fewer cases of obesity, which in turn may help reduce other health problems such as heart disease and diabetes.

Social Benefits of Urban Trees

Studies have identified a direct correlation between the amount of trees and grass in community common spaces and the use of those common spaces by residents, which leads to more opportunities for informal social interaction and greater relationships between neighbors.

It is for the above reasons that we need to take cognizance of trees for the benefit of the current and future generations.

Celebrate trees, they're great!