



If you've just spent every pleasant day of the last month raking leaves off your lawn, you may be of a mind to chop down every oak, maple and birch within reach.

On the other hand, on days in summers to come you'll sit beneath nature's own air-conditioners enjoying the coolness those trees give off even on the hottest days. And you'll bless their shade.

Furthermore, without trees and other plants, animal life would quickly disappear from our planet. Trees absorb carbon dioxide, an animal waste-product, and release in the air the element we require to breathe, oxygen.

While most of the Cape is treed with white or pitch pine and white, red or scrub oak, other species will flourish in our sandy soils and enhance your property, add dollars to your real estate resale value, and save you hundreds of landscaping dollars.

Some of these are available as seedlings from your Barnstable County Conservation District at far lower prices than you'd pay at a nursery. All they require is planting, some watering, and time to grow.

They can become handsome additions to your property if you'll take the time to order them before February 15, and pick them up on May 6, 7 or 8, 1976.

Would you like a hedge along one side of your lot? You can acquire 25 arborvitae seedlings, 3" to 5" tall, plant them a couple of feet apart, and in a few short years enjoy a fine hedge of light green, lacy foliage instead of looking straight into your neighbor's garage, clothes yard, or woodpile.

Do you admire the white flowering dogwood growing wild in some Cape woodlands and in many mid-Atlantic states? It will grow tall and stately and produce beautiful sprays of creamy white blossoms each spring, as well as crimson berries and foliage each fall, if you plant a couple of dozen next May.

Have you an appetite for real honest-to-goodness beach plum jelly? You can grow your own beach plums in most Cape soils. Birds flock to the fruit, so you'll want to pick before it's ripe, and that's best for jelly-making anyhow. In spring this low bush bears purest white flowers on black twiggy branches. The beach plum seems to prefer soil so poor nothing else will thrive.

If you need a windbreak tolerant of salt spray, Japanese black pine will grow rapidly, given plenty of space and sunshine. Similarly, where salt isn't a problem, but exposure to cold and wind winter kills less hardy plants, choose Scotch pine. This, too, needs space and sunshine.

For shady places, white pines grow rapidly if the earth is well-drained and loamy, and spruces, Norway and white. The Colorado Blue spruce requires lots of moisture and full sun.

Less common, but equally successful on Cape Cod, is Japanese larch, a fast-growing deciduous ornamental; autumn olive, a small tree between 8' and 14' at maturity, bears yellowish-white fragrant blooms in May and June. Its red fruit ripens in the fall and its silvery green foliage is cool-looking throughout the summer.

Fast-growing Chinese chestnuts grow happily in sandy loam, produce large sweet edible nuts, and are valued as shade trees.

Twenty-five of any of the plants mentioned above can be yours for a maximum cost of \$7.75 and some for as little as \$4.25.

When trees are small, ranging from 3" to 18" in height, they can be transplanted with little danger. The first year, while the root systems are getting established, is the most crucial time. An occasional bucket of water during dry spells will see them through the first summer. Nature usually takes over adequately from there.

There's no guarantee every seedling you plant will survive, of course, but at this price, if even four or five make it, you'll be well-rewarded for the small effort involved.

Planting tree seedlings is a simple task. Take your bundle of seedlings, your spade, a handful of yellow strips of cloth, and walk out to where you'd like to see the trees growing. It's a help if you can collar a boy to carry the water bucket for you.

Drive your spade into the ground as deeply as you can; tip it forward, leaving a narrow slit in the ground, the blade still buried. Look at your seedling to determine how deep it was growing when it was plucked from the earth. Stem color and texture is different where some was above, and some below the ground.

Tuck the rooted end into the slit at the same level it grew before, gently spreading the roots so they come in contact with the earth. Slide the spade out and, with your foot, push the ground back where it was, closing the surface firmly around the tiny tree trunk. Douse it with some water. Go on to the next place.

To be sure you remember to water each one during dry weather, it helps to mark the location with a bit of bright-colored cloth. Yellow or orange show up easily in the green foliage of summer and cloth will rot away in time.

Then, just wait. Most of the seedlings will become small bushes in a couple of years. In ten years, they'll be large bushes or small trees. In fifteen years or less, most will tower over your head. If their nature is to grow low and spreading, of course, that's what they'll be.

Your hedge will be thick and lush, and you'll be clipping it to shape of a Sunday morning. Your dogwoods will blossom white and blaze red, depending on the season. Your Scotch and Japanese pines will shelter you from winds and provide a thick screen. Your white pines will gain a foot or more in height each year, reaching for the sky.

Would you like to order some tree seedlings for planting?

To participate in this program, drop a postal to your Barnstable County Conservation office, Route 28, South Yarmouth, 02664. Or pick up the phone and call 394-8950. Ask them to mail you an order blank for the Seedling Program.

In 1975 approximately 80,000 seedlings were distributed. Over the past 13 years nearly 830,000 have been purchased by Cape Codders willing to spend half an hour or so planting 25 little trees.

Your order blank will include a complete description of all species offered together with full instructions. In larger quantities, prices per seedling are even lower than those mentioned above, so if you've a great deal of land you'd like reforested, this is your opportunity to obtain plants you want instead of living with whatever takes root by accident, in years to come.

My own plans include 25 white dogwoods, for starters. Also tempting are the Chinese chestnuts. Could be these are a marketable nut? And white spruces could become Christmas trees; would it be practical to have a Christmas tree farm on my vacant lot?

Wonder what the Zoning Board would say about such a project in a residential area. Oh, well, it'll be quite a while before the question is raised since even a fast-grower wouldn't be ready to harvest in less than ten years or so. Who knows what changes will come by then?

Meanwhile I'll have the joy of watching the seedling become bushes, and later stretch their boughs up and out in all directions. I'll have worn paths through the woodland, carrying water to my trees. I'll stand among them, smelling their fragrances and listening to the winds sweeping through their leaves and needles.

I'll feel contentment swell and fill my heart with a deep warm glow. I'll remember planting each and every one of those trees.