

All About Minnesota's Forests and Trees: A Primer




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Who Should Read This Book?

This book is written for those of us who care about trees and forests and who want to share our knowledge with others. With a little motivation, each one of us can teach about trees, care for trees, and establish a legacy of trees around our schools, homes, and communities. Please share what you learn with students, neighbors, community leaders, and others who care for trees and forests.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is a “primer,” which means every topic and new word builds on a topic or word introduced earlier. The first two chapters introduce the basics about trees and forests; chapters three through six discuss people’s interactions with trees—past, present, and into the future. Several appendices are provided to give the reader more in-depth information.

Words in *bold italics* are defined in the glossary.

To exist as a nation, to prosper as a state, and to live as a people, we must have trees.
—Theodore Roosevelt, United States President, 1901–1909

PREFACE WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT TREES?

You’ve probably enjoyed a hike through a sun-dappled hardwood forest, or the sight of a tree outside your window. You’ve undoubtedly used tree-based products and breathed tree-manufactured oxygen. But does that mean you ought to spend time thinking about trees and forests, too?

YES!

Think about your morning breakfast. Your kitchen may contain wooden cabinets, utensils, flooring, furniture, countertops, and walls. The glue holding together wood veneer contains resins from trees. Orange juice, apples, maple syrup, vanilla, and nuts come from trees. Your morning paper contains a mix of new and recycled wood fibers. The energy company powering your toaster may draw that power from burning wood chips or other biomass. What would your breakfast be without trees?

Trees and forests enrich our lives in an amazing number of ways. They provide beauty and shade, recreation opportunities, and habitat. They absorb carbon dioxide and make oxygen, provide shelter and shade. They help keep lakes, streams, and other waterways clean by holding soil in its place.

Best of all, trees are renewable. That means we can use resources like trees indefinitely because we can always grow more of them. But we must do this with care, to ensure that future generations can benefit from trees, too.

The notion of “care” is where knowledge comes in. To care for something, we must recognize how it lives and dies, its worth, and its needs. The purpose of this primer is to provide Minnesotans with these two gifts: a sense of the complexity and value of trees and forests, and an introduction to what it takes to keep this resource renewable.

After reading this primer, we hope you will take to heart a sense of stewardship for trees, and for all natural resources, so we, and future generations, may enjoy the forests of today and tomorrow.

