

There always seems to be two sides to every story. Over the holidays, I participated in a serious discussion with some friends about global warming and climate change. Some believe global warming is a hoax; whereas, others believe it is real.

Being science-oriented, I firmly believe we humans play an important role in the future of our home we call Earth. We must be stewards of the environment. Environmental stewards are individuals who strive to sustain the natural resources and the environment for future generations. It's a fact; all humans depend on the Earth's natural resources for their existence. Unfortunately, pressures on the environment from assorted human interventions are generating more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, and it is steadily increasing at an alarming rate.

One other concern is the ongoing and rapid deforestation occurring throughout the world. Whether you are a believer in global warming or not, I would like to share with you why I firmly believe trees play a significant role in the survival of our planet.

Trees are amazing! Trees help us in many ways. They are undeniably beneficial and extremely efficient. Everyone knows that trees provide us with a natural, renewable resource called wood. Since the beginning of time, wood has provided sheltering homes for humans as well as for wildlife.

I recently read an article published by Yale University regarding the value and efficiency of trees and the role they play in preventing global warming. First, the article indicates that we humans should plant more trees. The author's goal is for us humans to collectively plant one trillion trees worldwide by 2020. According to the author, an estimated six trillion trees existed throughout the world not so long ago, and presently the count is at three trillion. Deforestation is to blame. We are losing 15 billion trees per year due to deforestation.

Running out of wood is a serious potential problem, but the real concern regarding deforestation focuses on the efficiency of trees. Scientists attribute global warming to an increased concentration of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the earth's atmosphere. In 2006 the Earth's atmosphere had reached CO₂ levels of

382 parts per million (ppm). Currently, our atmosphere is at the level of 430 ppm. According to the article, if CO₂ levels increase much above 550 ppm, there will be an increase in the mean global temperatures from two to six degrees F. Should that happen, it will trigger dangerous, irreversible climate changes. Surely, no prudent human being wants that to happen.

As stated earlier, trees are undeniably beneficial and extremely efficient. Trees are economical and are a natural way for storing CO₂. Not only do trees remove CO₂ from the atmosphere, but they also remove other greenhouse gasses such as carbon monoxide and sulphur dioxide. Furthermore, a single tree produces and releases 260 pounds of oxygen back into the atmosphere yearly.

There seems to be two sides to every story. I firmly believe that global warming is real. I also believe that due to deforestation, alarmingly, smaller amounts of CO₂ is being removed from our atmosphere; while at the same time, more CO₂ is being added. Will planting trees alone prevent global warming and the deadly climatic changes predicted? By itself no, but as current inhabitants of this Earth we call home, it is the responsibility of each of us to do all we can to preserve and protect it. Either we humans must use our intelligence to urgently restore natural climatic processes, or nature will do it for us — and if so— likely do so without us.