

# ADDING Trees

A PRESCRIPTION

FOR HEALTH, HAPPINESS AND FULFILMENT



## 2016 National Tree Day Report Key Findings

*The Adding Trees: A Prescription for Health, Happiness and Fulfilment* report, commissioned by Planet Ark and sponsored by Toyota, examines the benefits time in nature has for five areas of life that Australians consider the most important for achieving a fulfilling life.

The report presents the results from studies published in peer-reviewed journals and Planet Ark's National Survey, finding that nature helps make people happier, healthier, brighter, calmer and closer.





## HAPPIER

Nature activates the brain's dopamine reward system

## BRIGHTER

Nature improves reading, maths and science

## CALMER

10 minutes outside reduces blood pressure

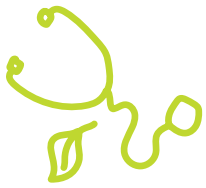
## CLOSER

Nature promotes positive feelings for family and friends

## HEALTHIER

Nature reduces chance of diabetes by 43%

grow  
MORE  
JUST ADD NATURE



## HEALTHIER

- Time in nature reduces a person's chance of developing a range of diseases, including diabetes by 43%, cardiovascular disease and stroke by 37% and depression by 25%.
- People living in green areas are 40% less likely to be overweight or obese.
- 'Green' offices reduce the need for sick leave by employees by 39%, through improvements in air quality and helping to lower stress.



## HAPPIER

- 86% of Australians with a strong connection to nature consider themselves to be overall happy in life.
- Nature induces positive feelings through a number of physiological mechanisms, including activating the brain's dopamine reward system.



## BRIGHTER

- Students who take part in outdoor learning programs perform better in reading, writing, maths and science, with 77% of teachers reporting student improvement in standardised tests.
- Employees in offices with indoor plants produce more ideas and original solutions to problems, increasing productivity by 17%.



## CALMER

- Just 10 minutes of relaxing outside is enough to significantly reduce blood pressure.
- Outdoor activities reduce anxiety, tiredness and stress, and triple a person's chance of having a restful night's sleep.



## CLOSER

- A strong connection to nature makes people more likely to feel passionate about relationships with their friends and family.
- Camping in nature at least doubles the frequency of sex for 89% of couples, even after they've returned home.

# More about Adding Trees: A Prescription for Health, Happiness and Fulfilment

The above results are a snapshot of the *Adding Trees: A Prescription for Health, Happiness and Fulfilment* report which examines the benefits time in nature has for five areas that Australians consider the most important for achieving a fulfilling life – health, happiness, learning, relaxation and relationships.

The independent National Survey included in the report was designed and commissioned by Planet Ark and conducted online by research consultancy group Pollinate in March 2016. The survey of 1,012 people aged 14-64 years is nationally representative in terms of age, gender, household income and residential distribution.

The report used the nature relatedness scale (NRS) to measure the connection to nature of participants, who were allocated a score based on their level of agreement with a series of statements like 'I always think about how my actions affect the environment' and 'I take notice of wildlife wherever I am'. This scale has been used and referenced in over 1,000 peer-reviewed journals.

The research illustrates that nature has medically and scientifically beneficial effects that enable people to grow healthier, happier, brighter, calmer and closer.

When people experience positive emotions and interactions in important areas of their everyday lives, they are significantly more likely to feel that their life has value, meaning and fulfilment.

In today's busy, time-poor and technological world, people are increasingly turning to electronic devices and social media to try to improve everyday wellbeing, with half of Australians (51%) saying that they visit social media sites as a way to manage their stress. In fact, this behaviour can increase feelings of stress, depression and social isolation.

Yet nature has overwhelmingly been shown to reduce stress, with just 10 minutes' spent outside in a natural environment resulting in a significant reduction in blood pressure and an improvement in mental health and wellbeing.

## How nature fixes like National Tree Day help

A prescription for adding nature into the lives of Australians can help them enhance many aspects of their lives in ways they might not expect, helping them grow healthier, happier, brighter, calmer and closer.

In fact, the Planet Ark National Survey revealed that 86% of people who have a close connection to nature are significantly more likely to consider themselves happy in life overall.

Planet Ark is encouraging everyone to incorporate more green into their homes, schools, communities and offices, and participate in a National Tree Day activity. These simple acts help nature thrive, as well as having far reaching benefits for the individuals, families and communities involved and can be a stepping stone to a more fulfilled life.

For more information and to find your nearest Tree Day site, please visit [treeday.planetark.org](http://treeday.planetark.org) or call the National Tree Day Hotline on **1300 88 5000**.

For more information on Planet Ark's nature-related research, please visit: [TreeDay.PlanetArk.org/research](http://TreeDay.PlanetArk.org/research)