

# PLANET AID POST

For the Environment, For People



Vol. 2 No. 1

## Why Planting Trees is Cool



Image credit: U.S. Global Change Research Program ([www.globalchange.gov](http://www.globalchange.gov))

We breathe 22,000 times every day. However, unless something goes wrong or we force ourselves to take a moment to appreciate the rhythm of our lungs at work, we never think about it.

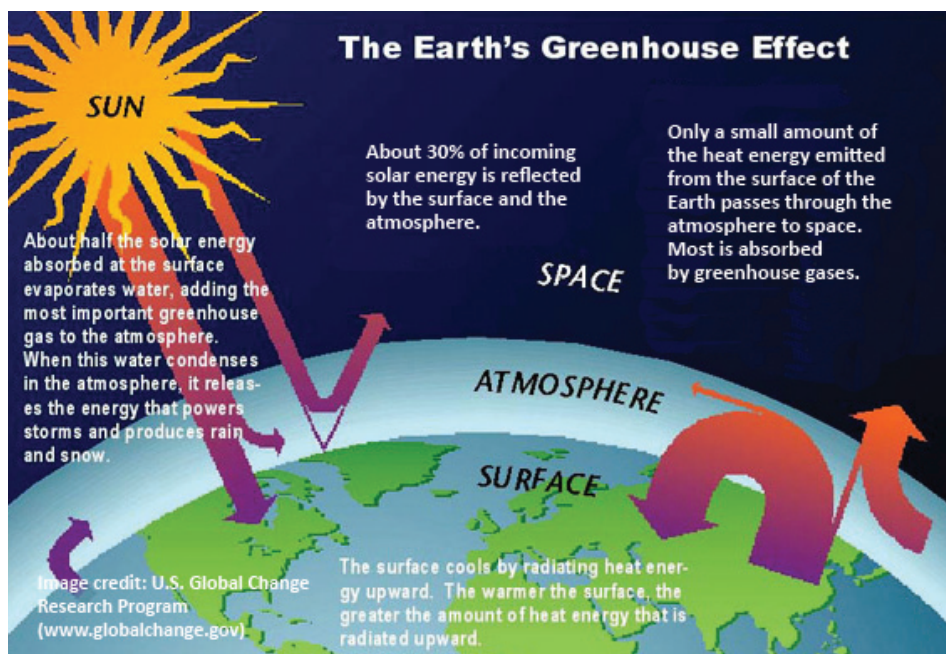
We also rarely think about how the plants around us mirror our breathing. We absorb oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide with each breath. Conversely, plants absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen. In this way, humanity survives in harmonious balance with plants, engaging in a ceaseless airborne exchange of the most basic elements of life.

Trees play a vital role in this gas balance and are thus often called “the green lungs of the Earth.” For example, just one acre of trees can produce enough oxygen to support 18 people. Even more important is that trees breathe in and absorb carbon dioxide from the air, which is one of the major greenhouse gases.

We have reached the point where we can no longer afford not to think about our relationship to the plant world. Forests have been destroyed on an unprecedented scale, particularly in tropical areas. As recently as 1947 tropical forests covered 6 million square miles of the planet. That amount has been reduced by half, with much of the forest cleared away in a thirty-year period before 1990. The green lungs of the Earth are today struggling to breathe and our once harmonious balance is teetering.

Along with this destruction of forests, we are burning increasingly large volumes of fossil fuels that release carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) into the atmosphere. Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, fossil fuel combustion has contributed to a 40 percent increase in the concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere. The Earth has thus become over-insulated in a heavy CO<sub>2</sub> layer, growing increasingly warm.

(Continued on page 2, **CPR for the Planet**)



### The Special Climate Change Issue

Planet Aid is dedicated to saving the Earth's resources. Since we began operations in 1997, our recycling program has saved more than 800 million pounds of clothing from wasteful disposal, thus preventing more than 1.5 million tons of greenhouse gases from entering the atmosphere. Of course, there is still much more to do. With this issue of the *Post*, we sharpen our focus on climate change, which we consider the most pressing environmental challenge of our time. We hope you find the articles in this issue informative, and that they inspire you to contribute to the movement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

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**CPR for the Planet** (continued from page 1)

Fortunately, there is reason for hope. Like a chain smoker who can no longer deny the source of his cough, we have begun to recognize that we must kick our carbon habit. We must also breathe new life into the world's forests.

The world will be saved to the sound of a billion shovels plunging into the ground to plant a billion (or more) new trees. Experts agree that to slow global warming and reduce its effects it is vital to reclaim forestland that has been lost over the past 50 years. This replanting process, called "afforestation," has been recognized and included in the Kyoto Protocol as a way to reduce global warming.<sup>1</sup>

The United States has made considerable progress toward afforestation. According to the U.S. Forest Service, the fast regrowth of temperate forests since 1990 have contributed to increasing carbon uptake in the States by a nearly one third. Much of the increase is due to land that had previously been cleared for agricultural purposes, and which has since been reclaimed by trees. While rural areas are doing better, more tree planting is needed within and adjacent to urban and suburban areas to further increase carbon sequestration.

Tropical forests hold promise for capturing more carbon through afforestation. As mentioned at the outset of this article, tropical forests have been decimated over the last fifty years, and continue to be deforested as the demand for fuel wood and arable land increase.

One method for reforesting tropical areas that has had considerable success is to permanently integrate trees among agricultural crops. This method, called agroforestry, not only increases afforestation but also improves crop production. For example, a species of Acacia tree in Africa known as *Faidherbia* has been found to double farm productivity when grown amongst crops. The tree absorbs nitrogen from the air and deposits it in the soil through roots and leaves — the latter are shed at the beginning of every rainy season, which has the added advantage of letting sunlight reach ground crops during a high-growth period.

**Are Old Growth Forests Carbon Neutral?**

Young trees absorb and store CO<sub>2</sub> at a fast rate due to their rapid growth. Planting new trees is thus an excellent way to fight global warming. But what about older existing forests? How should they be managed to increase carbon absorption? Should they be replaced by new growth?

Very mature forests (called "old growth") are considered to be carbon warehouses rather than sponges. The phrase used to describe them is "carbon neutral," which means they emit as much carbon to the atmosphere through decomposition and other processes as they take in. However, this idea, once universally accepted, is being challenged today.



Young seedlings grow under *Faidherbia* trees in an agroforestry demonstration project at a PlanetAid-supported teacher-training college in Nhamatanda, Mozambique.

"The conventional wisdom for the last 40 years," reports Beverly Law, a professor of global change forest science at Oregon State University, "has been that old growth forests were carbon neutral." However, Law indicates that the conventional wisdom was wrong, and that studies have shown that mature forests are indeed a significant source of carbon absorption.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, because mature forests store large quantities of carbon in their massive trunks and root and branch structure, which has been collected over hundreds and sometimes thousands of years, it makes sense to keep it locked up there. Otherwise, should these forests be cut down, the stored carbon could easily be released into the environment.

**Don't Hold Your Breath**

Mature or young, we must all grow more conscious of our relationship to the plant world and do all we can to reduce carbon emissions and increase absorption. You can start right now by getting out a shovel and planting a tree. It is one small step, but over the long haul everyone will breathe easier because of it.

**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> The Kyoto Protocol is an international treaty focused on controlling global warming. It was adopted in Kyoto, Japan in December 1997 and entered into force in February 2005.

<sup>2</sup> "Study: Old Growth Forests do Soak up CO<sub>2</sub>," <http://www.msnbc.msn.com>, September 11, 2008.

**Seeing the Forest for the Carbon**

When trees "inhale" they convert CO<sub>2</sub> into sugar and cellulose that they use for food and growth (one half of the dry weight of wood is made up of carbon). This process of converting CO<sub>2</sub> by trees into wood is called "carbon sequestration."

A single tree can sequester roughly 48 pounds of carbon per year. When taken in the aggregate that can add up to a huge carbon offset. For example, a study by Oregon State University found that the state's forests (the western rain forests and the eastern Ponderosa pine

forests) absorbed up to half of the carbon emissions from the state's power plants and the cars driven on its highways on an annual basis.

On a global scale, the Earth's forests soak up on average about 8.8 billion tons of carbon each year, according to a recent study led by the U.S. Forest Service.<sup>1</sup> This amounts to about one-third of carbon emitted worldwide through burning fossil fuels.

<sup>1</sup> "U.S. Forest Service Finds Global Forests Absorb One-Third of Carbon Emissions Annually," USDA Forest Service News Release, July 14, 2011.

**Farmers Learning to Cope with Climate Change**

Most farms in Sub-Saharan Africa are very small, with an individual farmer growing crops on less than an acre of land. Yet these farmers (43% are women) shoulder 80% of the burden for feeding the continent. Severe weather brought about by climate change has been making an already challenging existence for these farmers even more difficult. A single flood or drought can wipe out thousands of these producers, creating widespread food shortages.

PlanetAid supports sustainable local food production in Africa and other developing countries. The proceeds PlanetAid receives from the sale of used clothing has been used to support programs that help smallholder farmers in Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and other countries.

PlanetAid assists small farmers through a development model called Farmers' Clubs, which is implemented by local organizations in countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. This model mobilizes producers to work together, pool resources, and share information about improving their methods and becoming more resilient in the face of global warming's impacts.

Each farmers' club (comprised of approximately 50 members each) receives training from agronomists, water technicians, or other experts on topics that cover soil conservation and erosion control, crop diversification and storage, and other improvements in technique. The introduction of peanuts and soybean, and the promotion of collaborative processing that adds value, such as making soy milk from soy, increases the range of available food to farmers, while also providing them with a greater source of income. Helping smallholders obtain expanded access to markets has also been vital, and Farmers' Clubs do this by linking groups of producers to outlets where their products can be sold.

Because drought is a constant threat, the program puts special emphasis on helping participants find and develop new sources of water. It also introduces reliable, low-tech well pumps, and encourages well recharging so that wells are able to produce water year-round. Efficient delivery methods, such as drip irrigation, as well as bolstering the capacity of the soil to retain water by increasing the proportion of organic matter and surface mulching, are among the conservation methods that help to make each and every drop count.

Farmers have planted **4 million trees** in Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe in conjunction with the Farmers' Clubs program. The trees are helping to control erosion and provide an added source of food and income, while absorbing and storing carbon dioxide.

Farmers' Clubs has created momentum within rural communities across sub-Saharan Africa toward positive, productive change, with substantial increases in crop yields and income and improved nutritional status and health. For example, Farmers' Clubs helped increase average production in Malawi by 250 percent and income by more than 100 percent, while also reducing crop loss by 26 percent and increasing water availability using low-tech irrigation by 280 percent.

For more information go to [Planetaid.org](http://Planetaid.org) and enter "Farmers Clubs" in the search box.



## THE NEW RED DAWN

For centuries, mariners considered a red dawn as an omen of bad weather. The well-known rhyme “Red sky at morning, sailor take warning” was their reminder to not be fooled by a rosy sunrise, and to expect a storm to strike before the day’s end.

Today, there is a new warning on the horizon. Polar ice is melting, oceans are rising, drought is spreading, and monster storms are brewing. These are just a few of the signs that point to the changing global climate. But this is likely only the beginning. Unless we change our habits quickly, experts predict we will experience a tempest of hardship and upheaval yet unseen.

Scientists have been warning us about the dangers of global warming for decades. Only recently have more people begun to take the threats seriously. According to a survey by the Pew Research Center in October 2012, 67 percent of Americans said there is solid evidence of global warming.<sup>1</sup>

It is important to point out that the Pew Survey was taken just before Hurricane Sandy struck the northeastern United States. The percentages will surely be higher when the survey is taken again.

Few events have made the advent of climate change more real to so many than that highly unusual October hurricane. Further evidence was provided by the fact that 2012 was the hottest year on record in the United States. Temperatures were consistently above normal between June 2011 and September 2012, which hasn’t occurred since the government began keeping such records in 1895.

Reporting in *Scientific American*, senior editor Mark Fischetti explains that warmer oceans provide more energy for storms, and a more humid atmosphere loads up hurricanes with rain, causing more severe flooding when the storms hit.

Fischetti also cites research that links the melting of Arctic ice to changes in the jet stream in the fall and winter that can cause late hurricanes.<sup>2</sup> Hurricane season does not normally extend deep into the fall, and the fact that Sandy struck when it did was a clear sign of the impact of climate change.

In a new report *Turn Down the Heat*, the World Bank warns that if global temperatures rise by 4 degrees Celsius by the end of the century, the world is in for a “doomsday scenario.” Among the impacts would be widespread crop failures, malnutrition, the dislocation of large numbers of people from areas inundated by the rising sea, and the complete collapse of some countries.

“There is no certainty that adaptation to a 4 degree world is possible” write the authors of the report. The scenario echoes a line from Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis*, which coincidentally also invokes a red dawn:

*Like a red morn that ever yet betoken’d,  
Wreck to the seaman, tempest to the field,  
Sorrow to the shepherds, woe unto the birds,  
Gusts and foul flaws to herdmen and to herds.*

Unfortunately, the lines from this poem may become all too real. The Global Carbon Project predicts that a 3.5 degree increase in temperature is likely to be exceeded by the end of the century.

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> “More Say There is Solid Evidence of Global Warming,” Pew Research Center, October 15, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Fischetti, Mark, “Did Climate Change Cause Hurricane Sandy?” *Scientific American*, October 30, 2012.

## THE GLOBAL POLITICS OF



The award-winning 2012 documentary film *Climate Refugees* brought into focus the reality that climate change is displacing people from their homes around the globe. The disasters causing this displacement include droughts, desertification, rising seas, and the more frequent occurrence of extreme weather events such as hurricanes, cyclones, fires, flooding and tornadoes. The result is mass global migration and border conflicts. Even the Pentagon now considers climate change a national security risk and “climate wars” could become a looming threat.

Most climate refugees are expected to come from Asia, Africa, Latin America and small island states. In 2010, 42 million people were made homeless worldwide by extreme weather, with India, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Indonesia, China and Pakistan being among the hardest hit. (Bangladesh alone has had 70 climate-related natural disasters in the past 10 years.) Some estimate that by 2050 the number of climate refugees could rise into the billions.

While climate change is considered “everybody’s problem,” the solution ultimately rests with developed nations. The United States has 4 percent of the world’s population. At the same time it emits nearly 20 percent of global CO<sub>2</sub>. Our country’s heavy reliance of fossil fuels is the chief reason we are causing so much damage.

The high per capita emission rate in the United States raises equity issues with regard to who should bear the cost of impacts. We have benefited immensely from our fossil fuel-driven economy. It is only fair that we, along with other developed nations that have similarly benefitted, shoulder a greater burden of mitigation.

Fortunately, this idea is gaining momentum. During the 2012 UN Climate Change Summit in Doha, Qatar, an agreement was reached for the first time that rich nations should move towards compensating poor nations for losses due to climate change. How this compensation will occur is yet to be determined. However, many representatives from the developing world consider the agreement a significant breakthrough.

On the domestic front, progress is being made to curb CO<sub>2</sub>. A regional program that has attracted considerable attention is the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). The RGGI is made up of a coalition of 10 Northeastern states, who in 2008 established the nation’s first carbon auction designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Power generators in the participating states have been ordered to reduce their collective carbon dioxide emissions by 10 percent by 2018.

A November 2012 progress report estimated that the RGGI helped avoid the emission of 12 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>, (a reduction of approximately 30 percent). This amount is equivalent to 2 million passenger vehicles being taken off the road for one year. Energy customers are now also poised to save nearly \$1.3 billion in utility bills based on energy efficiency upgrades spurred by the RGGI. The program also created \$617 million in investments to increase efficiency among businesses and households and is accelerating the development of local clean and renewable energy sources.

Unfortunately, the RGGI has been under attack by industry groups, who claim profits have been impacted by the reduction in energy usage spurred by the initiative. One of the actors opposing carbon auctions such as the RGGI is the American Legislative Exchange Council, which has been providing legislative templates for states to adopt. One of the templates is entitled: “State Withdrawal from Regional Climate Initiatives,” which states: “...a tremendous amount of economic growth would be sacrificed for a reduction in carbon emissions that would have no appreciable impact on global concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub>.”

In 2011, New Jersey’s Governor Chris Christie yielded to pressure to withdraw from the RGGI, which he called a tax gimmick. One year later, Hurricane Sandy slammed the New Jersey region, demonstrating that climate change was no gimmick. Fortunately, Sandy’s U.S. victims were aided by a \$60 billion federal relief package. This staggering figure brought home the true cost of our carbon-rich habits.



**Help Planet Aid fight global warming. Make your online pledge to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by visiting Planetaid.org and clicking on “Get Involved”.**



# Planet Aid News

## 🌍 Inauguration of New Teacher Training College in Malawi

The Dowa Teacher Training College was inaugurated in Malawi on November 30, 2012. The college was built through a unique public-private partnership led by Planet Aid; the U.S. Department of Agriculture; the Malawi Ministry of Education, Science and Technology; the local development organization, DAPP Malawi; and other supporters. The new training facility satisfies an urgent need for qualified educators and brings Malawi closer to meeting the U.N. Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education.

Among the dignitaries present at the inauguration ceremony was Jeanine Jackson, U.S. Ambassador to Malawi. In her speech Ambassador Jackson stated that, "These colleges serve as a testament to the strong cooperation and growing partnership between the United States and Malawi. They reflect [our] shared commitment to quality education and the promise of a prosperous future for Malawians."

The Government of Malawi recognizes that the teacher training colleges established by Planet Aid and DAPP Malawi are models of educational development and thus signed an agreement to establish and operate a total of six such teacher-training colleges nationwide by 2017. These colleges will train 1,000 primary school teachers on an annual basis. The Dowa Teacher Training College is the third such college to be established—there are also colleges at Chilangoma and Amalika. More than 850 students have graduated from the three colleges, and close to 800 are currently in training. A fourth college at Mzimba is well underway and is anticipated to open in early 2013.

For more information about Planet Aid's support of teacher training visit Planetaid.org and type in "teacher training" in the search box.



Happy student teachers smile in front of the beautiful new Dowa Teacher Training College.

## 🌍 Planet Aid at the 19th International AIDS Conference



Sean Sinclair of Planet Aid speaks with participants at the start of the AIDS conference.

In July 2012, Washington, DC hosted the 19th International AIDS Conference. The theme of the conference was "Turning the Tide Together," focusing on mobilizing communities around the globe to bring an end to the AIDS epidemic.

Planet Aid staff and volunteers came out in force at the conference to speak with participants about prevention and to raise awareness about the Total Control of the Epidemic (TCE) program. Wearing TCE's signature red berets along with T-shirts emblazoned with the TCE logo, the Planet Aid team greeted hundreds of attendees from dozens of countries and handed out copies of the special AIDS-focused issue of the *Planet Aid Post*. The action inspired a lively dialogue, with many of the attendees sharing their own experiences about fighting HIV/AIDS. Before the conference was done, more than 4,000 copies of the *Post* were distributed, delivering a message of hope about controlling this epidemic once and for all.

For more information about Planet Aid's support of TCE and other HIV/AIDS prevention and support programs visit Planetaid.org and type in "AIDS" in the search box.

## 🌍 Launch of the all new Planetaid.org

PlanetAid recently launched its redesigned website at Planetaid.org. The site provides users with up-to-date information about our mission and operations, including pages that explain why we have so many bins and what happens to the clothing you donate. The site also contains a new and easy way to get a tax receipt online for your clothing donations. You can now also make a monetary donation to Planet Aid online.

While overhauling the entire site, we were careful to retain popular functions from the previous version, such as the "Bin Finder," which allows users to locate a nearby Planet Aid bin in their neighborhood.

Finally, to help users better understand Planet Aid's mission, a new campaign was launched in conjunction with the unveiling of the new website. The campaign utilizes the acronym DROP to simplify the four dimensions of our mission: Donate, Recycle, Our Earth and People.



## 🌍 What's Happening in the Planet Aid Service Areas

It's been a busy six months at Planet Aid. Here is a select summary of events from the 21 states we service. Kudos go out to all our employees for their dedication and hard work. For more information about what's happening in our local offices, visit "Your Local Planet Aid" at Planetaid.org.

**New Jersey.** Planet Aid lent a hand to the Hurricane Sandy response effort. We coordinated with Clear Channel Communications and its local radio station Z-100 to deliver supplies to communities that requested them. We also separated out jackets and blankets for distribution should they be needed.

**Missouri.** Planet Aid donated 8,400 pounds of clothes, coats and blankets to the Care of Poor People's (COPP) Fall Survival event. Held annually, the Fall Survival event is an opportunity for the area's homeless to get hot food, personal hygiene products and clothes in preparation for the upcoming winter. Many employees, friends and families of Planet Aid also donated their time to help setup and run the event. This was not the first time Planet Aid has supported the COPP. In spring 2012, Planet Aid was presented with COPP's Compassion Award, in recognition of the volunteer hours and clothes it had provided to the organization.

Overall, our Kansas City office recently donated approximately 11,600 pounds of coats and blankets to charities that included COPP, Uplift, Inc., Spofford House, and Hope Faith Ministries.

**Ohio.** Planet Aid is working with the K&D Group—northeast Ohio's largest privately owned management and development firm—to help all of their tenants go to "zero waste" by placing bins at all the company's facilities. K&D sent notices to their tenants asking them to help reduce their waste volume by placing their unwanted clothes in Planet Aid's bins.

**Los Angeles.** Planet Aid has partnered with the Los Angeles City Fire Department to promote recycling of shoes and clothing. Bins are now located at 15 firehouses throughout the city.

**Pennsylvania.** Planet Aid invited students from the Valley Christian School, who are studying recycling and environmental stewardship, to tour our warehouse and shipping facility.

**Massachusetts.** Planet Aid employees volunteered at the Hyde Park Food Pantry where they packed and sorted groceries for local residents before Thanksgiving.



The Los Angeles Fire Department now hosts Planet Aid bins at their stations.



Delivering supplies to Toms River, New Jersey in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy.

## 🌍 The Wide Wonderful World of Secondhand Clothing

Most people think that when they donate clothing to a charity in the United States that it will be handed over to disadvantaged members of the local community. The reality is often much different. As Pietra Rivoli writes in *The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy*, "There are nowhere near enough poor people in America to absorb the mountains of castoffs, even if they were given away."

Indeed, the market for secondhand clothing in the United States is relatively small and focused only on the highest quality items. Most people are surprised to learn that U.S. charities sell only about 20 percent of their clothing donations on the domestic market. What most people also don't know is that the remainder is packed up and shipped in bulk containers to be sold in developing countries.

Beyond the U.S. borders, the used clothing scene is a noisy and colorful affair. These markets often encompass large outdoor areas, with goods carefully arranged on makeshift tables or hanging on strings from ramshackle roofs. The spaces between tables are often tight and crowded, with barkers calling out to customers to view their merchandise. Sellers may offer a variety of goods or specialize in a particular type of clothing; for example, women's underwear, children's T-shirts, men's sport jackets, or even fine lace draperies.

In the hustle and bustle of foreign used clothing markets you get a sense of how important this industry is to the economy of a developing nation. It not only makes it possible for people to clothe themselves, but it also contributes to job growth. For example, research has shown that in Kenya more than five million jobs were created by the secondhand clothing industry.

To read more about the world of secondhand clothing visit Planetaid.org and click on "Our Work."



A mother in Beira, Mozambique shops for shoes in the secondhand clothing market.



# Planet Aid Crossword

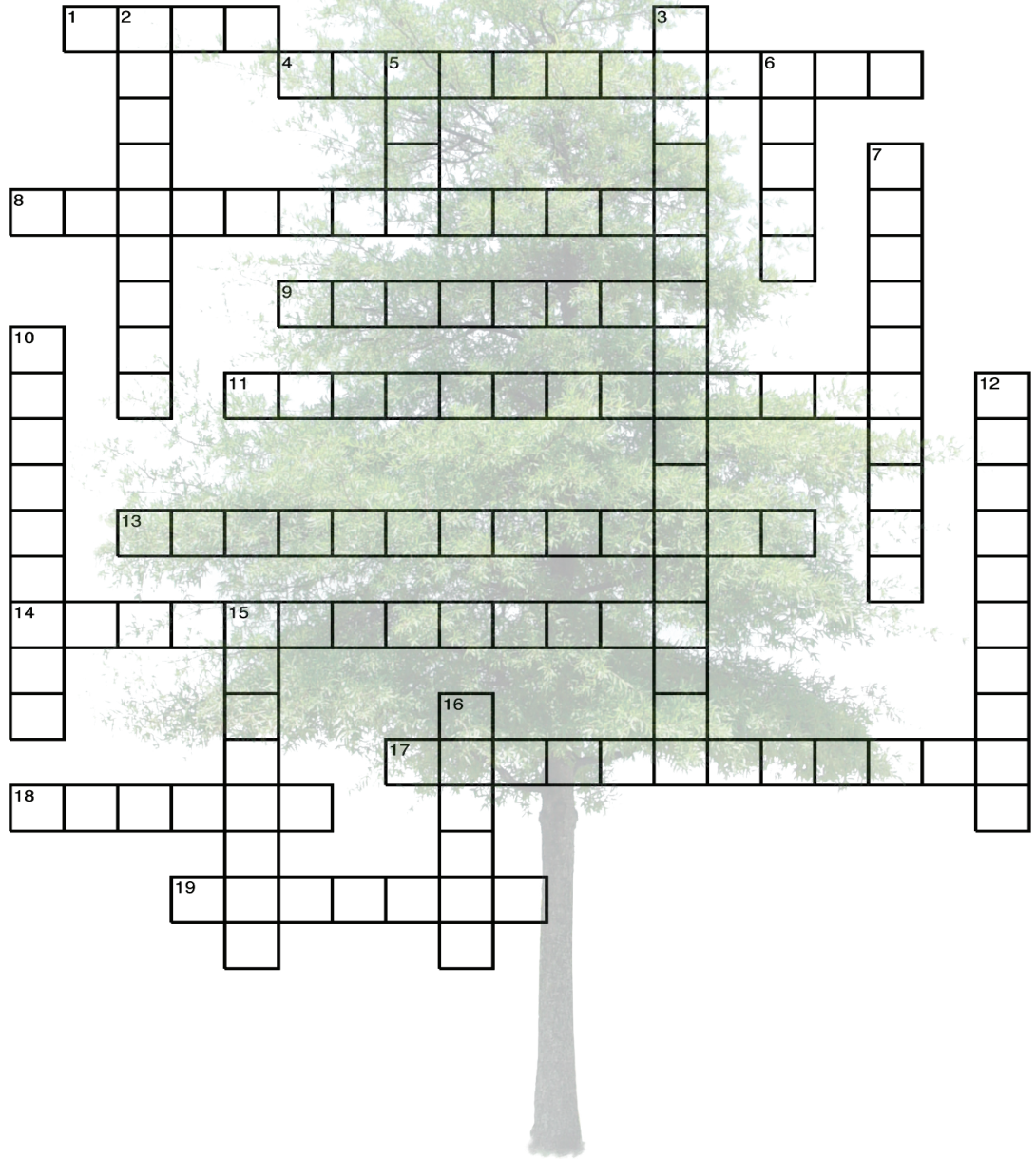
(for answers visit Planetaid.org and click on "Planet Aid Post")

**Across**

- 1. The new Teacher Training College in Malawi is called?
- 4. Process of integrating trees among agricultural crops?
- 8. We inhale oxygen. What do we exhale?
- 9. Farmers' Clubs are active in Malawi, Mozambique and what other country?
- 11. Human activities, primarily the burning of fossil fuels and clearing of forests have caused?
- 13. What is the name of the 1997 international climate treaty?
- 14. Replanting process included in the Kyoto Protocol?
- 17. Planet Aid provides support to small farmers through what development project?
- 18. What do plants release into the air?
- 19. For mariners, what is the sign of bad weather approaching?

**Down**

- 2. Very mature forests?
- 3. Which organization published a survey regarding global warming?
- 5. Climate program made up of a coalition of 10 Northeastern states?
- 6. What are the "green lungs of the Earth"?
- 7. Which Planet Aid service area is in partnership with the local fire department?
- 10. Which organization produced the report, "Turn Down the Heat"?
- 12. Which country has had 70 climate-related natural disasters in the last 10 years?
- 15. Signature attire for TCE program?
- 16. In what country have Farmers' Clubs increased average production by 250%?



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Planet Aid is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that recycles used clothing and shoes. It is registered with the U.S. Agency for International Development as a private voluntary organization (PVO).

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[twitter.com/#!/planetaid](https://twitter.com/#!/planetaid)

Follow us on Twitter

Request your free DROP bumper sticker at Planetaid.org just below the DROP.



To find the location of a nearby bin or for other inquiries contact your local Planet Aid office at Planetaid.org.

Support Planet Aid in fighting global warming by donating your unwanted clothing. You can also make a direct monetary contribution (which will be used to support programs such as Farmers' Clubs) at Planetaid.org or by completing this form and mailing it to:

**Planet Aid, 6730 Santa Barbara Court, Elkridge, Maryland 21075**  
(Make checks payable to Planet Aid - all donations are tax deductible.)

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell)

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT: \_\_\_\_\_ (\$35) \_\_\_\_\_ (\$50) \_\_\_\_\_ (\$100) \_\_\_\_\_ (\$250) \_\_\_\_\_ (\$500) \_\_\_\_\_ (\$1000) \_\_\_\_\_ (other)