Planet has lost half its trees

Trees have been growing on planet earth for millions of years. By the time the human race evolved 200,000 years ago, there were 5.6 trillion trees worldwide, according to researchers at the Yale School of Forestry. Since then, humans have removed nearly half of them — and most of that has come in just the last 200 years. Today, trees cover about a third of the earth’s land mass. But deforestation continues.

Last month, the World Resources Institute reported that destruction of tropical forests worldwide actually increased last year, led by Brazil. Researchers say that logging and other causes, such as wildfires and insects, cause the loss of about 15 billion trees a year. About 5 billion trees are replanted annually.

The loss of trees accelerates global warming. Trees absorb carbon dioxide, the leading greenhouse gas, before it enters the atmosphere. Conversely, cutting and burning trees releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Deforestation is one of the leading causes of climate change.

Here in the Pottstown area, we’re continuing to lose trees, as well. Preserving our trees should be a local priority.

Commentary by Tom Hylton

The world is losing about 45 million acres of trees annually, an area four times the size of New Jersey.

POTTSTOWN AREA TREE LOSS — About 200 acres of trees, shown top right in 2002, were subsequently cut down to make room for the Manatawny Village development in Pottstown and adjacent Upland Square Shopping Center in West Pottsgrove, below right.