

When I feel stressed, I go for a walk in the woods. I could never live in a big city. I need green. On a hot summer day, I relish the shade of a large chestnut tree. I love the whispers of birch leaves, the groans of pine branches in a strong wind, the eruptions of birds bursting through foliage. To calm my nerves, I stand barefooted on winding roots.



But our trees are disappearing. Approximately 10 million hectares of trees are deforested annually. Roughly 15 billion trees are cut down every year while about 5 billion are planted, resulting in a net loss of around 10 billion trees per year. That means we lose a football field of trees per second. There goes another one, and another, and another.

Trees produce almost thirty percent of our oxygen. (The rest comes from the ocean. More on that in my second novel *Gungho Lisa* and upcoming blogs.) In addition to absorbing carbon dioxide, trees provide habitats for biodiversity, prevent soil erosion, and manage water runoff, reducing flood risks.

When I turned sixty a couple years ago, instead of throwing a party, I sent an email to everyone I knew asking them to plant a tree for me. My goal was “Sixty Trees for my Sixtieth.” My birthday is September 7<sup>th</sup>, and by Christmas, over 100 trees had been planted by my friends! Most of them picked a suitable tree for their backyard. Some friends

weren’t homeowners, so they planted a tree somewhere in their neighborhood. How wonderful that I still receive photos of these growing, flourishing trees on my birthday every year!

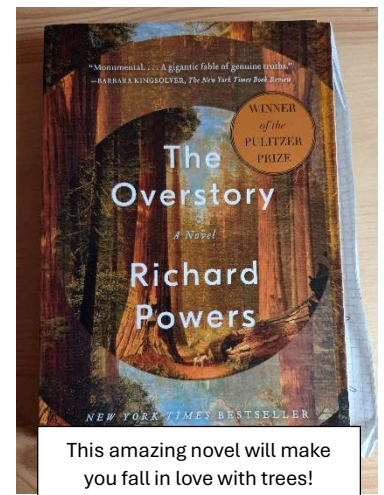
A couple of my friends opted to donate to a tree-planting organization, and this is where things got tricky. There are some very trustworthy organizations out there: for example, the Pennsylvania chapter of the Sierra Club runs community tree planting and urban reforestation initiatives that focus on educational, effective, and environmentally sound practices. But some of my friends got duped when they donated a tree for me.

Tree planting hoaxes and scams are large-scale greenwashing campaigns where corporate-funded trees die shortly after planting or are replaced by industrial timber monocultures. These efforts often prioritize marketing over environmental impact, capitalizing on public desire to combat climate change without ensuring long-term ecological benefits.

Some projects are simply poorly supervised. In 2019, eleven million saplings were planted in Turkey but ninety percent had died within three months due to improper planting and lack of rainfall. Over fifty percent of tree planting projects in Africa have been found to be positioned in grasslands or savannahs, which are not suitable for dense vegetation. Many organizations lack accountability and transparency regarding whether their trees are maintained or even put in the ground.

Even worse than such misguided practices are intentional hoaxes. Many “reforestation” projects replace biodiverse natural ecosystems with non-native, industrial timber plantations that are eventually harvested, releasing stored carbon. Tree farms are not how we want to support Mother Nature! Images of young saplings can be deceiving. If they ask for a dollar to plant a tree, then it is probably a reforestation scam.

Legit projects report on the survival rate of their trees, not just how many were planted, and they provide transparent monitoring. Ideally, projects should partner with local communities to ensure the trees benefit the area and are cared for. They should prioritize planting mixed, native species that strengthen local ecosystems rather than monocultures.



This amazing novel will make you fall in love with trees!

On my permaculture farm, we planted several trees every year. I liked planting fruit and nut trees the best because they also provided food. Now that I rent an apartment, I still donate towards planting a tree every year. Besides the Sierra Club, other worthy organizations include One Tree Planted and the Arbor Day Foundation.

What are you planning for your birthday this year? I hope it includes planting a tree.

Subscribe to my free newsletter under “contact” [www.tanyaswriting.com](http://www.tanyaswriting.com) for my April 26 article *Save a Tree*.



Grafting fruit trees on our permaculture farm in Gündlischwand, Switzerland, 2014.

You can see more pictures of my permaculture farm (2014-2019) on my website: [www.tanyaswriting.com](http://www.tanyaswriting.com)