

Climate Shadows Walk Toolkit

Challenge Objective:

Discover how shade affects comfort and climate in your community.

Challenge Overview:

In this toolkit, you'll become a temperature tracker. You can do this on your own, with friends, as a club, or with your class. You can...

- Research the importance of trees and temperature
- Note temperature differences under tree canopies vs. unshaded areas
- Map your findings in a creative way
- Propose ways to create more canopy coverage

Short on Time? Choose Your Path:



Researcher:

Do the Research and Expert Interview steps.



Designer:

Skip straight to the Explore and Document steps.



Explorer:

Focus on the Research and Explore steps.



Advocate:

Try out the Document and Take Action steps.

RESEARCH

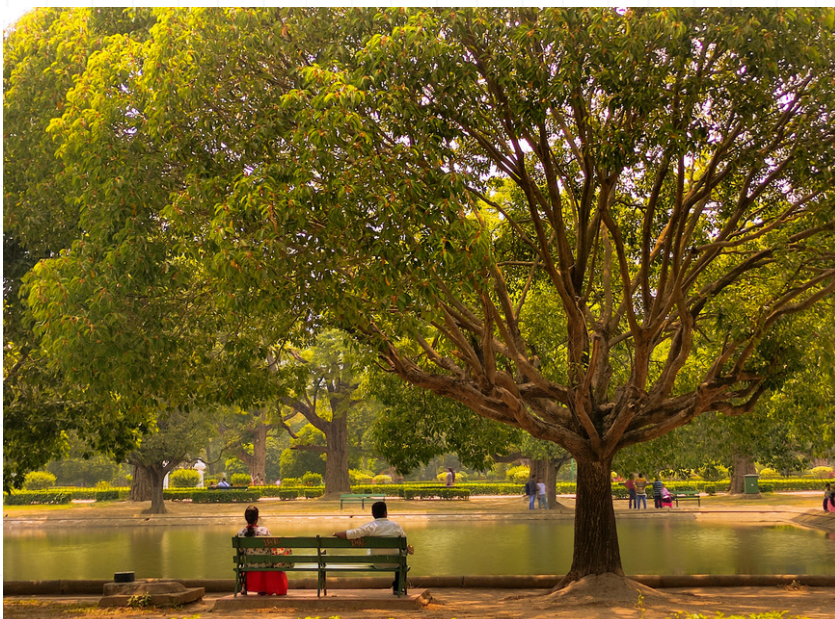
Goal:

Understand why shade and tree canopies matter for communities.

Activity:

Learn how tree canopies help regulate temperature by doing one or more of the following:

- Watch a short video from an urban planner, arborist, or climate scientist on this topic. (*Search terms like: “urban heat islands,” or “tree canopy benefits.”*)
- Find a local or national news story about urban heat islands or how communities are adding trees to reduce heat.
- Look up a local map that shows tree canopy coverage or heat vulnerability in your area.



EXPLORE

Goal:

Observe how tree canopies impact comfort and activity by collecting data on shade.

Activity:

- Take a walk along a set route during the day, noting which areas are shaded/have tree coverage vs. those in full sun.
- Record how the temperature feels in each spot or use a simple thermometer to collect actual temperature data.
- Observe where people, wildlife, or plants tend to gather and where they seem to avoid, based on the shade or sunlight.
- Take photos or sketch out your route, along with your observations.

You can use our templates to help guide and record your exploration!



Tip: Can't go outside or no trees in your area? Use Google Street View to explore a neighborhood street or park.

LEARN FROM AN EXPERT

Goal:

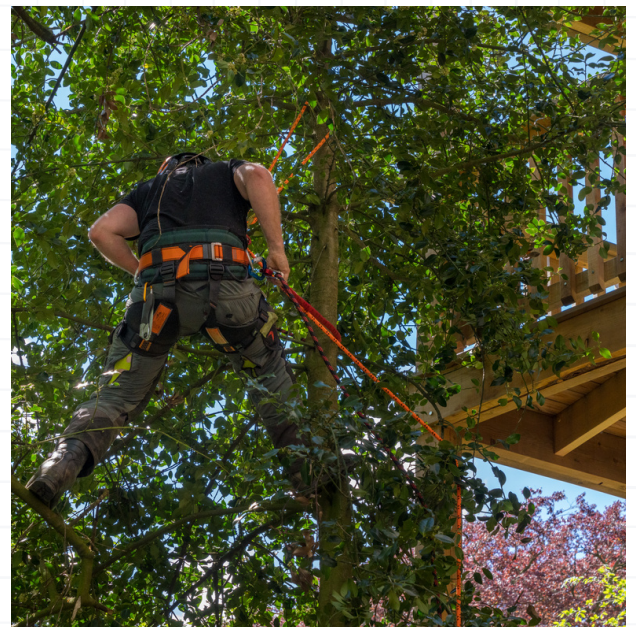
Gain insights on urban greening from local professionals.

Choose one:

- Interview a city planner, arborist, or a community tree planting group
- Email your questions to one of the local experts above

Sample Questions:

- How do cities decide when and where to plant trees?
- What challenges or barriers exist to adding more shade in communities?
- What benefits have you seen from adding more trees and shade?
- How do trees and shade affect local temperatures, energy use, or community health?



DOCUMENT YOUR FINDINGS

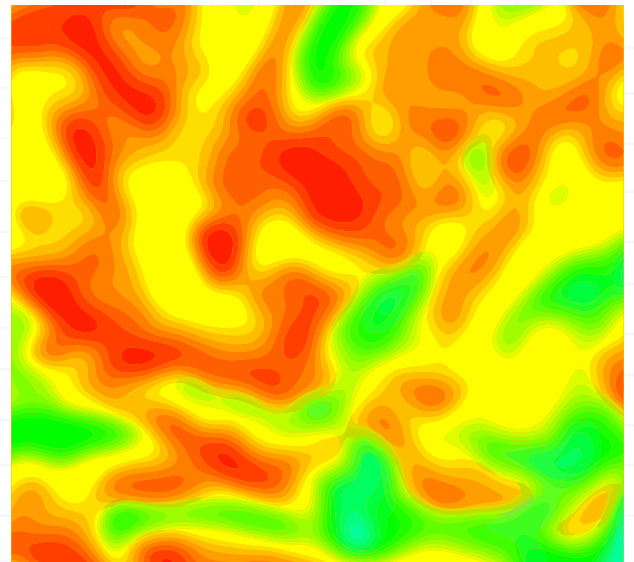
Goal:

Find a way to present your data visually.

Turn what you learned into a visual story through one or more of the following ways:

- Create a heat map or chart comparing shaded and unshaded areas along your route.
- Design a poster, slideshow, or infographic that documents your research and shares your insights.
- Include solutions such as tree species recommendations, structure designs, or community actions that could increase shade.

Make sure to add photos, sketches, or quotes from your exploration to make your presentation more personal and engaging!



TAKE ACTION

Goal:

Take your learnings to the community and spark change!

What's one way you can bring this to your community? Choose one of the following actions (or create your own!):

- Display your presentation for your school, library, or community center that shows your data and ideas for increasing shade.
- Present your findings to a local group such as a city council, student government, or neighborhood association.
- Post a digital story on social media to raise awareness about heat and shade in your area.
- Plant something! Organize a small planting event or join a local tree-planting or park clean-up day.



REFLECTION

Shade can change how we experience heat. Ask yourself:

- What could more trees or shaded areas change for your school or community?
- If you were designing a heat-resilient city, what would you prioritize and who would you involve in the planning process?
- Which areas in your community do you think need the most attention for shade or cooling, and why?

Your discoveries can spark ideas for how to make your community cooler, greener, and more welcoming for everyone.

