



The Doctor Is In



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Wood Feels Good

NEW YORK, NY July 17 (PinoyGlobal) - Yes, wood makes us feel good. Way back when, I remember sleeping on a wooden floor with a banig mat and a soft pillow, which was so different from sleeping in a bed covered with a comforter. There's just something about a wooden floor that makes us sleep better.

I find the aura of Japanese restaurants soothing because almost everything in them is made of natural wood. It makes me more connected to Mother Nature and more relaxed to be on a tatami mat floor walking barefoot. Then I love to eat on wooden plates with chopsticks and drink saki from bamboo cups. The simplicity of wood is like having a simple lover who does not need make-up, jewelry or a fancy car to be beautiful.

My grandfather was a carpenter. He had a sash factory and made windows with capiz. The sawdust smelled good and I remember playing with the leftover wood. I made my own toys from wood and imagined that I was making cars and castles as well.

Now wood is disappearing fast and has become a very expensive commodity. Narra is gone. Acacia is disappearing. Our forests themselves have virtually disappeared. Houses are now made of concrete instead of wood. But I believe we can bring back the glory of wood again. How? Simply by growing trees!

When I started in the emergency room (ER) almost twenty years ago a fellow ER doctor who was in his 50s said

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he was planting mahogany trees in Davao. He was spending all his money on this project and went home every year to check on its progress. He had planted hundreds of hectares with mahogany trees and now he is about to retire and his trees are ready for harvest.

Here in America mahogany is a very expensive wood. A tree can produce \$5,000 worth of lumber and when it is made into furniture it could produce \$20,000 worth of furniture. A hectare could grow 800 mahogany trees. So if you do your math you'll see that harvesting a hectare a year could offer much more cash than your Social Security, and provide a much better retirement fund.

I know a retired U.S. Navy man in Pangasinan who is obsessed with mahogany. He started planting ten years ago. Now his trees have grown straight and beautiful with trunks about two feet in diameter, and will be ready for harvest in five years.

I have planted my own mahogany trees on about two hectares, in between some mango trees. I would like to follow in the footsteps of those two retired people I know who love trees like I do, especially since I know I'll be retiring soon myself.

The Philippines has the right climate, soil and amount of sun to grow trees, and we have a lot of empty space. If all those empty spaces were planted with trees, imagine how beautiful our country would be. These trees need care only when they are young. But soon after, Mother Nature takes over and they can be left on their own.

We will always need wood, so let us plant trees continuously. It's good for global warming because the trees use up the carbon dioxide in the air for their photosynthesis.

Each Philippine citizen should plant a tree. Then we would have about 70 million new trees and a cooler, cleaner, healthier and greener country.

But for now, even Baguio has lost its beauty due to disappearing pine trees. Gone are the days when you could smell the pines there, and the sun could not be seen when you are walking or sitting under them in their cool shade. When Baguio was developed on the site of the Old Pines Hotel, a lot of old pine trees were cut, and the sun showed its anger in the sky. Also, when Joseph Estrada built his log cabin in Baguio a lot of pine trees were cut at Camp John Hay.

But it is not too late. Pine trees can still be planted on all the empty lots in Baguio, and stricter rules should then be imposed on cutting pine trees.

Our country is blessed because of its abundance of flora and fauna. We have a variety of species of plants and animals and we just need to take care of them. Nature will do the rest.