

parasites that can cause cankers and root rots.

By keeping accurate records each year on the planting site, plants, weather, and the diseases that develop, you gain knowledge of where, when, and what diseases occur. Armed with this information a disease management schedule can be refined so that the best control method is used

at the most effective time on the plants at greatest risk to disease.

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## SHOULD URBAN FORESTRY BE DEFINED?

by Bailey Hudson

**Abstract.** The complexity of an urban forest varies from city to city. This diversity in urban profiles and politics complicates the development of any acceptable definition. A consensus definition has proven to be extremely elusive and raises the question, is one necessary? Urban forestry managers must ask themselves, would a definition open new doors of opportunity? Opinions are many and diverse as to what urban forestry is, and what it encompasses. This paper attempts to clarify some of these questions and assumes the all-inclusive aspect of the urban forest concept.

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*Men imagine that their reason governs words, while in fact words react upon the mind, wherefore the solemn disputes of learned men often terminate in controversies about words; and even definitions cannot remedy this evil since definitions themselves consist of words and these engender others endlessly.* From "The Idols of the Cave and the Market Place," by Francis Bacon, 1561-1626.

Unfortunately, this philosophy of Francis Bacon's is probably true. However, in today's world of rapid communication, definitions are commonplace and often provide a means of settling

heated controversies. It is not within the scope of this paper to review all the negative or positive aspects of an urban forest definition. The purpose here is to examine some of the problems and attempt to answer the threshold question — is a consensus definition necessary?

The designations of urban forests and urban forestry are often taken out of context. In this paper, urban forest is a complex entity that is people and experience oriented. Urban forestry is synthesis management and is process and activity oriented. This distinction suggests that urban forestry is all-encompassing of various parts and elements. The components of the urban forest must be brought together with a synthesis management approach to effectively sustain the forest benefits for people.

Universal interest in the urban forestry field and its adaptability to a variety of professional disciplines seem to defy hope for a consensus

definition. Arboriculture, traditional forestry, park management, horticulture, landscape architecture, urban planning, and other related professions have independently advanced their definitions with little coordination at any level.

Urban forestry functions are dominated by professional and lay personnel of diverse backgrounds and motivations. This diversity and individual interpretation have resulted in polymorphous definitions of urban forest benefits and urban forest activities. Further, effective communication is hampered by an inability to understand the motivation and dedication of the various people involved. The primary product of this confusion is an obvious lack of an acceptable definition. This disorder creates inconsistent interpretive programs for the resident resource managers and affects their ability to adequately define the urban forest.

The two threads of continuity in this fabric of diversity are a collective concern for the future of the urban forests of America, and concerted efforts to improve the environment. Despite this united concern and fundamental goal, the vast majority of urban forestry professionals have failed to articulate the total value of the urban forest to their audiences. Arborists communicate with each other with a fair degree of clarity, but we do not communicate effectively with the people who use and consume the benefits of the urban forest. To be meaningful, the "what" urban forest and the "how" urban forestry must relate to people, all people. Our inability to define this forest in terms that foster public support has caused a reduction in political endorsement.

Apparently the urban resource manager became comfortable and complacent within this chaotic atmosphere, shielded by fiscal budget constraints and perhaps philanthropic programs. Lately urban foresters have seen their jobs grow more complicated. They now must participate in the political arena. Lack of solid, acknowledged benefits of the urban forest forces the urban forest minister to exploit the intangible benefits of aesthetics and amenities. Public health and welfare values of the forest are traditional interpretive tools. However, these values are often accepted with tongue in cheek and must be strengthened with active research programs. The

amenity service stigma must be replaced by public health and welfare values that are supported by the research community.

The planning of an urban forest seems to be dominated by a concern for the physical elements of cities. The engineering disciplines of landscape architecture, urban planning, and civil engineering collectively exert their influence to affect change to the physical landscape. The engineering professions tend to emphasize an undefined "quality of life" in terms that are at best remotely related to the health and welfare of the urban dweller. This emphasis generally pursues controls for people's impact on the environment rather than the environment's impact on people. Urban forest benefits and urban forestry activities should be measured in terms of their contribution to the well being of the human population.

Urban forestry continues to struggle with offensive and defensive management strategies. There is an urgent need to use economic terms and to justify our programs with cost:benefit and cost effective methods. Negative impacts of the forests should be skillfully addressed and justified by the creative resource manager.

Do we need unanimity on a definition? Recently the City of Santa Maria, California adopted an urban forest section in its Environmental Resource Management Element (ERME). The ERME is one of several General Plan elements mandated by the State of California. Santa Maria elected to integrate conservation, open space, and scenic highways into one document. The City of Santa Maria was developed on a treeless floodplain and was not blessed with natural woodlands or a peripheral interfacing forest. Therefore, Santa Maria's urban forest is less complex than those of other cities. In developing the urban forest section of the ERME, the question of definition became a primary consideration. After considerable discussion and revision, the following definition was proposed.

*The urban forest can be most simply defined as the planted environment within the fabric of a variety of man-made uses. Collectively, it includes trees, shrubs, and lawns in city parks, public areas, private yards, and shopping centers — the overall green environment. It is a people-oriented forest designed to provide a quality living environ-*

*ment and enhance the social, cultural, sensory, and economic dimensions of urban life. The urban forest also has ecological value. It modifies the environment in a positive way by providing shade, wind protection, air filtering, noise reduction, and soil protection. It can modify the environment negatively when it requires more energy and water resources to maintain than are reasonably available in the long term. The measure of the urban forests value and viability would be in how well the positive benefits are balanced with consumptive requirements.*

This definition was conceived to meet the demands of local realities and characterizes the simplicity of this particular forest. It was also assessed against provincial political concerns for water conservation and other energy resources. The definition was motivated by the need to accomplish a purpose and is not suggested for a consensus definition.

The merits of an urban forest section in an ERME are two-fold. First, it is a local legal definition that describes "what it is" and "what it does" as a public health and welfare resource. The definition is more physical than abstract and identifies use of the urban forest resource.

Secondly, the definition in the ERME reinforces the provisions and intent of the street tree ordinance. Eventually, the street tree ordinance will be expanded and will serve as an all-inclusive urban forestry management element. The combination of these legal documents totally insures the future of the City of Santa Maria's urban forest.

What then is the answer to this definition

dilemma? Apparently there is no one answer. The important thing is for us to understand the urban forest as an ecosystem, insure that the urban dweller understands the dependence on it, and manages the forest accordingly. We must ask ourselves what useful purpose will a definition serve? In the case of Santa Maria there was a sense of purpose and accomplishment.

As stewards and ministers of the urban forestry bounty, we must dedicate ourselves to the preservation and continuance of a healthy urban environment. To allow the decline of environmental resources is a crime against our descendants, and could have a serious impact on the urban profile and function. As we ponder the question of definition, it is imperative that we consider that man is the only product of evolution capable of controlling evolution in a natural or contrived environment.

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