



Meaning and design of nature for the urban built environment

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Trees in urban environments: which species and why?

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The aim of this research is to (1) assess past and current practice in terms of the generic criteria used to select tree species and cultivars for planting on public land in urban environments such as city streets, parks and gardens, and (2) develop a framework for assessment of tree species for such uses. Many lists of trees deemed to be suitable (or unsuitable) for urban planting are widely available, and some include information about selection criteria but often with little background explanation. Commonly used criteria included commercial availability of species, compatibility with urban environments, landscape design, low maintenance, avoidance of nuisance factors and historical practice. The most common criteria are concerned with concept of choosing species compatible with local climate and soils. We suggest that there should be greater use of ecological, genetic and biogeographical criteria, and more consideration of horticultural adaptation when selecting which trees to plant in urban environments. Tree selection and maintenance is a long-term exercise, and we propose a matrix involving environmental-, human- and build and infrastructure-health along with a series of questions that should be asked when selecting trees.