



Living with Urban Soils

TREE CITY USA®
BULLETIN

No. 5

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Out of sight, out of mind, is not the right attitude toward soil when trees are at stake. Soils and soil management are especially critical in urban settings where the work of nature has largely been altered by human activity. Your knowledge of soils — and the nourishment, water and anchorage that they alone can provide for trees — will help assure success for new transplants and long life for older trees.

The lowly soil. We call it dirt, walk on it, cover it with concrete, and have long lost the reverence of our forebears who called it Mother Earth. Yet from the soil comes our very existence, and where it is rich, life is rich. The pioneers knew this well and let the soil be their guide to locating farms and villages as they spread across the land.

Today nobody locates their home because of the soil. We live where we must and in most cases never give a thought to the soil. But for those who love trees, soil must once again be our guide. By understanding a few basics you can be sure to select the species that will do best in your soil. You can also improve the health, vigor and chances of longer life for your shade trees by including the following soil management techniques in your plans for tree care.

CITY TREE — COUNTRY TREE

An urban tree and its country cousin are in two different worlds. In a forest, a tree is in a specific site because of the natural sorting and sifting that is part of ecology. The tree is usually well matched to the microclimate, including the soil in which it is growing. In urban sites, most trees can use a little help from human friends to overcome alterations in the soil and other stresses resulting from the activities of urban life.

