

The Benefits of Street Trees

Having a tree outside your house can be annoying; blocking the light through your windows, roots which damage pavements and garden walls, and there are those leaves to clear every autumn. Nonetheless, there are huge benefits to having street trees that you may not be aware of. Trees improve air quality by trapping pollen and dust, and by absorbing pollutants. A single large tree can supply the Oxygen used by four people. They retain water that would normally run off the soil, reducing water use, and help prevent flooding and soil erosion. Deciduous trees shade the summer sun and create more amenable microclimates around them, reducing air conditioning costs in buildings.



Mature urban trees make neighbourhoods more pleasant by screening unattractive views and softening the most brutalist architecture. Trees absorb and block noise; in the right position reducing noise by 40%. Shoppers linger for longer and spend more where trees are present. Trees have even been shown to reduce reported crimes, car speeds, and cars parking on pavements. It is no surprise then, that having trees on your street can increase your house price by 15% or more and make it quicker to resell.

People living in urban areas now outstrip those in rural, and urban areas are the fastest

growing form of land cover. Trees are also important urban wildlife refuges. A mature tree is an ecosystem providing habitats and food for a wide variety of birds, insects and other animals. In the urban environment they increase biodiversity where it is most needed. Together with Parks, our mature street trees are a great legacy of Victorian Britain, and need to be defended from development and neglect. We are fortunate in South London that our local authorities see the benefits of mature urban street trees and wish to protect and encourage them. A recent report showed that Newcastle, Edinburgh and Sheffield cities fell the most trees. In these times of austerity, mature trees are replaced, favouring varieties that will not grow as tall, or damage pavements. However, small fast growing trees have shorter lifespans, and many saplings will not survive the urban environment, and may need to be replaced again.



Surely, we should protect those trees that have already proved themselves to be suitable? Pollarding and engineering solutions to kerbs are far better alternatives to felling.

Why not become a LB Bromley Tree Friend or volunteer with Trees for Cities?

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