

Amenity Trees: Defining Concepts In Use

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The term or concept of "amenity trees" has three components critical to understandings. The concepts are: the term "tree," a definitional problem which is not described here; the concept of "amenity" by traditional definition and current professional usage; and, the recognition of service and value by humans.

Getting Beyond "Nice"

The word "amenity" is derived from the mental image of "pleasant." The use of the word followed several intellectual tracks. The definitions for current use, and use as a modifier of the word "tree," include three lines of thought which are intertwined:

1. Amenity is a quality, feature, or attribute of being pleasant, attractive, and agreeable which is conducive to comfort, convenience, and enjoyment.
(Summarize this concept by using the word "charming.")
2. Amenity is a physical feature or object which increases attractiveness and value of a site through contributions to the physical, psychological, or material comfort of people and which facilitates happiness, pleasure, enjoyment, and contentment.
(Summarize this concept by using the word "satisfaction.")
3. Amenity is a physical object which is productive, useful, and practical, providing services which aid, protect, and comfort people.
(Summarize this concept by using the word "utility.")

A "Good" Tree

Trees play four primary roles in society: trees are generators of goods and services; tree components are converted into physical products; trees are ecological controllers and modifiers of site resources; and, trees are symbols and focal points of cultural and psychological models.

The value of a tree become confused across all four of these constructs. The physical product component is the easiest to pull out and place a marketplace values upon. Attempts have been made to itemize, then assess, ecological functions and values. The role of trees within the human mind and conceptually within society has been but newly initiated for study. What is the value of a good tree (or a bad tree)? The value which living and dead trees generate beyond a physical tree product, is composed of both ephemeral and escalating benefits and costs. The tree as its component products must be eliminated and the tree as a factory -- generator of goods and services -- must be celebrated in consideration of an amenity tree.

Utility Pet

Who does a tree serve? As a generator of amenity values, tree value depends upon human perceptions and expectations. For the private tree owner, the tree is asset, slave, servant, and pet. For public tree owners /

mangers, trees are a public resource trust generically serving the public. In addition, public trees specifically act as a springhouse of values (and liabilities) arising at some landscape point and generate values which dissipate into the environment over some distance from the tree. Value generation and dissipation distances vary by the specific value generated, by time, and by spatial aspects of the tree and site.

Most tree values are not constrained, nor recognized by, human concepts of ownership and boundaries. Public trees generate values and risks for private and public areas. Private citizens, and people using property in common, all receive values from public trees. Private trees generate values and risks which flow into public areas, with many people sharing some of these values. The overlap of tree generated values with the diverse concepts of real property ownership and control is complex. Humans live, move and work along and around boundary constraints. Trees do not have these constraints as viewed by most people. Tree values are centered and concentrated at the tree-soil-atmosphere interface, flowing away from the site in a dilution process dependent upon the specific value or risk.

Tree Ignorance

Does being unknowing and unappreciative of value diminish amenity concepts? To be unaware is to not yet have conceived of some or all of the inherent attributes present. We are all unaware of tree values at some level. Many values are not brought into focus until diminishment or loss of these values occur. Building awareness and developing an appreciation of tree value is critical in conserving and accentuating present worth, as well as helping manage for increasing value over time.

Defining "Amenity Trees"

An amenity tree is allowed to occupy a site and +to serve its surroundings in a useful manner which culminates in the aid, protection, and comfort of humans.
