

Closing the performance gap: Tree establishment and their aftercare and recovery (Held online)



Agenda

Chair: Colleen O'Sullivan, Tree Officer, London Borough of Camden and Chair, London Tree Officers Association

How do we close the performance gap and enable 'establishment'?

Keith Sacre, Urban Forestry Director, Barcham Trees

When do you remove protection and decide the tree is independent in the landscape?

Rupert Bentley-Walls, Senior Arboricultural Officer, Suffolk Council

Does planting size make a difference for trees to establish?

Andy Hirons, Senior Lecturer – Arboriculture, University Centre, Myerscough

Partner: Arboricultural Association

The recording and presentations are available on the TDAG website:
<https://www.tdag.org.uk/past-events.html>

Below are the anonymised comments, questions, responses from the speakers and attendees as well as references that took place in the 'chat' during the meeting.

Keith Sacre's presentation

Question:

Do we think the performance gap is getting worse or improving?

- It would be nice if we could answer this question, but there is no data available to say one way or the other, so perhaps this an area for research?
- Can we discuss how to get this research funding and who should carry it out?
- Has anyone seen an update on the mortality rate for trees? (TIT 2 suggested 23% for highways... I would be interested to see new data... and I feel like there have been at least a few 'all local authorities FOIs on this subject by now).
 - I feel like there have been loads of FOIs about felling and planting and planting success rates... so my bet is that the data is out there... somewhere...
- I think it is much the same as it has always been. We see many reports about wholesale tree losses but little is said about the 90%+ success rates.
- So, we need to identify the keys for success?

- Dare I say it, KPI's?
 - For standard trees... what do we think a good KPI might look like? Is a 90% success rate 'good'? or is 80% good?
 - To develop your KPI you need a fair bit of info, such as which species are more likely to fail, which succeed etc, and then your KPI's will be poor, fair, good, optimal based on your current rates benchmarked against similar organisations
- If grey infrastructure failed at the rate that urban trees do, questions would be asked, so why the difference...?
 - Sadly, because the masses care about potholes and don't care about trees
 - And there we are - accountability and persons paid for workmanship regardless of quality.

Question:

Picking up on comments above, we need an evidence base for planting numbers and success rates. We can't keep investing in planting without covering the cost of failure or in other words, should planting costs include post planting establishment which may be 10 years as part of the planting costs. We might plant fewer trees but have greater success?

- We need to move away from head count to quality! A colleague heard of someone planning to plant a million trees. Sounds impressive, unless they are all whips planted at 1000 / ha!
- Extended maintenance provided via. extended defects liability period (5-10 years...?) within the contract can help to ensure acceptably quality and delivery of time-critical maintenance activities. Non-compliance = contractor not paid.

Question:

Is there data on the number of trees being planted per county and the number of trees being felled eg Ash die back and development to see if we are gaining in trees or not

Question (in response to particular woeful example of tree planting from Keith)
Do we need to campaign for the rights of trees???

- Frome TC was looking into something like this.
Maybe one to collaborate with the Woodland Trusts' campaigns?

Question:

Who maintains the street trees? is it tree officers or highway engineers, the latter who might not be aware about removing protective measures when needed

Question:

What consequences can we have for not caring apart from the failure of the tree?

- KPI's?

Question:

We plant large amounts of whips and transplants in difficult to access locations for aftercare and maintenance hence our failure rate is high. Be interested to know what options we have or new ways/approaches?

Information:

BS8545 - we are organising some minor amendments for BS8545 so it can be reissued with the update of BS5837

Question:

Are there standards for the nursery industry????

- Plant Healthy certified nurseries might be a good place to look
<https://planthealthy.org.uk/directory>
 - A very good place to start. Plant Healthy nurseries should be used as default

Rupert Bentley-Walls' presentation

Question:

Do you factor in the post-planting cost in the overall costing?

Question:

Are any of these trees planted with extended subsurface soil systems to provide volume?

- Can I add to this question - do you find, Rupert, that the trees have root opportunity space without needed special sub-surface systems?
 - Yes, you only have to look at some of our London Planes in streets which are faring well but not to the degree of an open grown tree.
 - The space below ground can cause street trees to run out of energy and this can be species related

Comment:

Mare Street - centre of road seems such an obvious win. How much did you have to do to prove the argument...or does Mare Street provide the arguments for others?

Question:

What are your favourite small tree species for urban planting - I need alternatives for Rowan!

- <https://www.tdag.org.uk/tree-species-selection-for-green-infrastructure.html>
- Cornus kuosa
- Prunus Amanogwa
- Prunus x hillerii Spire
- Prunus Okame,
- Pyrus chancleer,
- Acer campestre Queen Elizabeth,
- Elsrik, any of the upright varieties.
- Chineses birch,
- Lagerstroemia,

Question:

To what extent is urban design / placemaking factored in to tree selection / distribution in the urban realm?

Comment:

Many thanks, Rupert...some great pictures of success...will be asking for them for TDAG illustrations because it is so encouraging to see them!

Question:

Are there any studies around the advantages of adding mycorrhiza to soil pits at planting?

Comment:

GBU are not the only company who provide such root protection.

Comment:

The tree adoption by the local community you mentioned Rupert is brilliant. It hits on your questions you asked Keith and the response 'But who cares?' Educating those who will benefit from the tree, empowering them gives hope but I also realise this is not always going to be possible but it does offer hope!

Andy Hiron's presentation

Question:

Given that younger trees establish better than older trees, do landscape architects and designers need to encourage patience rather than the move for 'instant' trees?

- Yes
- Yes, but will nurseries be happy to provide smaller trees?
- Yes, and it is encouraged in LI tech guidance.
- Rupert Bentely-Walls:
I've been really changing the size of trees especially with a 12-14cm dia and dropping down to 6-8cm and 8-10cm more choice more nurseries and in my opinion better establishment rates
- How does this change costs? Smaller trees are presumably cheaper but require maintenance for more years?

Information:

Trees in hard landscapes paper from Landscape Below Ground 2023

Alessio Fini, professor of arboriculture, University of Milan, Italy

"Are Pavements a Major Cause of Tree Decline?"

From Sue James: I have asked Alessio for a link to or pdf of his paper.

Question:

Soil volume...is there a problem when the rooting volume provided by various sub-surface methods 'runs' out and there is no opportunity space beyond???

Information:

Asrafur Rahman and Roland Ennos provided some useful papers on 'what we know' for TDAG - <https://www.tdag.org.uk/research.htm>

Also <https://www.europeanarboriculturalstandards.eu/etpls>

Question for implementation:

With the talk of accountability earlier on - in this circumstance the contractor is accountable for delivering x no. of trees, etc but then the nursery lets you down - I suppose you are still accountable as you have selected the nursery to provide those trees... who ultimately bears the responsibility/accountability?

- The contractor is accountable as we are replacing trees removed on a contractual basis. I don't know the complete numbers until ordering time. Its challenging.

The tree adoption by the local community you mentioned Rupert is brilliant. It hits on your questions you asked Keith and the response 'But who cares?' Educating those who will benefit from the tree, empowering them gives hope but I also realise this is not always going to be possible but it does offer hope!

Closing the performance gap: Tree establishment and their aftercare and recovery
Held on 18th October 2023. Questions, comments and references.
Partner: Arboricultural Association

Next TDAG seminar 15th November

Just in case I forget the next TDAG session will be on Urban Water on 15th November -
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/first-steps-in-urban-water-managing-water-as-a-resource-tickets-715940656777?aff=oddtcreator>

Save the Date - 13th December

Tree costs and financing options - link will be circulated about 6 weeks ahead

You can find TDAG events here: <https://www.tdag.org.uk/events.html>
and TDAG past events with recordings and presentations here:
<https://www.tdag.org.uk/past-events.html>

Trees People and the Built Environment 5

Trees, People and the Built Environment 5 - Birmingham April 23 and 24 2024 has just opened for registration...

<https://site.phedloop.com/event/TPBE5/home>