

Building local identities through tree diversification Greater Lyon, France

Species diversification



TDAG Case Study

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Completion date:
1992-on-going

Team:
Greater Lyon Authority,
Trees and Landscape
Unit (of the Highway
Department)

Further information:
Greater Lyon Tree
Charter (English
version):
<http://blogs.grandlyon.com/developpementdurable/files/downloads/2015/06/Charte-v-british-complete-2.pdf>

Summer and winter views of a new street lined with oaks (*Quercus frainetto*), alders (*Alnus glutinosa*) and willows (*Salix alba*) to deliver instant impact to this urban extension in Sathonay, near Lyon. The fast growing willows will be removed within 20 to 25 years and the alders within 40 to 60 years. By then, the oaks will have grown to buffer these losses

Image: Anne Jaluzot (winter) and Frédéric Ségur (summer)

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In the mid-1990s, plane trees represented over 52% of the tree population managed by the Greater Lyon Authority (GLA). In 2018, this had been brought down to 21.7%, while the overall number of species found in hard landscapes in the Lyon area had increased by 80%, with over 280 different species and 94 genres represented. This stark increase is a result of a strategic commitment to diversification. The goal set in the GLA *Tree Charter* is that, for trees in highways and other public hard landscapes, no single tree species should represent more than 10% of the whole. To deliver this, the GLA monitors the composition of its tree population at a strategic level. For each neighbourhood, it takes cues from the existing character of the landscape to agree a local plant palette: this combination of species is used to help build upon and reinforce local identity, ensuring that the strategic 10% diversity goal does not result in a loss of local coherence and character. At a project level, the GLA encourages the designers it works with to enrich the composition and plant design vocabulary with which they work wherever possible. Where a regular, single-species avenue planting is required in a historic context this is accommodated within the agreed preferred tree palette defined for the neighbourhood. In new developments, whether as part of urban extension or major infill regeneration schemes, designers are encouraged to use compositions and patterns

combining species (see our case study on Garibaldi Street, and images of Sathonay and Tassin below).

According to Frédéric Ségur, the GLA tree specialist, the GLA's success in greatly diversifying the population of trees found in Greater Lyon's streets and civic spaces is the result of three key factors: "First, we've got to assume control of not only strategic policy but also procurement of design and management, allowing us to set some objectives at all three levels that are congruent and mutually supportive. Second, we've got to build strong relations with our suppliers. We work with contractors that supply trees, and the climate of trust we've created has enabled them to stimulate the local nursery grower to increase the quality and diversity of their production. While, back in 2007, less than 50% of the newly planted trees were of local provenance, this is now close to 80%. Third, we do not prescribe a plant palette to designers. The 10% objective set in the tree charter is used as a means to initiate a dialogue: it sets a framework for collaboration rather than dictates a solution. For each scheme that is not done in-house, designers come to us to validate their plant palette and we use this opportunity to make suggestions with alternatives options where we feel inappropriate choices have been made given local climate, soil, conditions or space availability."



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In front of the Town Hall in Tassin, a Lyon suburb where conifers are a noticeable feature in private gardens, a combination of pines (*Pinus nigra*, *Pinus sylvestris*), oaks (*Quercus ilex*, *Quercus coccinea*) and apple trees (*Malus tschonoskii*) offers both adequate heat tolerance and positive reinforcement of the local landscape character

Image: Anne Jaluzot

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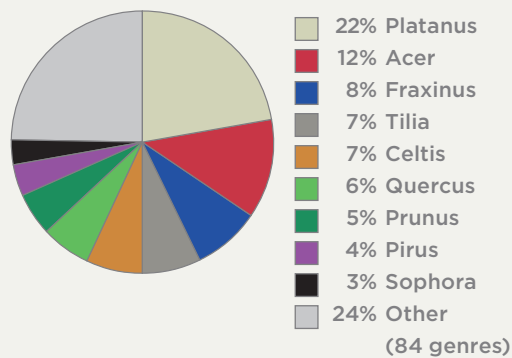


In Greater Lyon, 280 different tree species grow in hard landscapes (+80% compared to 15 years ago)

Image: Xx

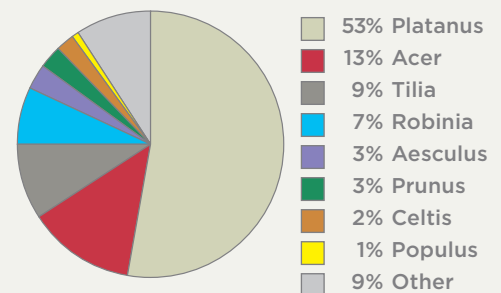
Species distribution in 2018

%



Species distribution in 1994

%



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About this Case Study

In 2012, TDAG identified 12 good practice principles for urban trees. The project described in this case study illustrates the principles highlighted below:

- 1/ **Know your Tree Resource**
- 2/ **Have a Comprehensive Tree Strategy**
- 3/ Embed Trees into Policy and Other Plans
- 4/ Make Tree-friendly Places
- 5/ **Pick the Right Trees**
- 6/ Seek Multiple Benefits
- 7/ Procure a Healthy Tree
- 8/ Provide Soil, Air and Water
- 9/ Create Stakeholders
- 10/ Take an Asset Management Approach
- 11/ Be Risk Aware (Rather than Risk Averse)
- 12/ Adjust Management to Needs

For more about the 12 principles, see [*Trees in the Townscape: A Guide for Decision Makers*](#)

Keywords

Species diversification, Citywide, Species selection, Tree strategy.

Author and sources

This case study was drafted by Anne Jaluzot, based on site visits and interviews with Frédéric Ségur, Landscape and Arboricultural Manager at the Greater Lyon Authority.

Version 1.1

This case study was originally published in [*Trees in Hard Landscapes: A Guide for Delivery*](#) (2014). Version 1.1 was released in February 2018.