

FOREWORD

We live in a time of increasing urbanisation. Indeed, world urbanisation is predicted to exceed 66% by 2025. The movement of people from rural areas to cities during the 20th century has been called the largest human migration in history. As such, the urban environment is of increasing importance to more and more people. There are, of course, trees and other vegetation alongside people in many urban areas but only recently, in about the last 20 years, have these other living components in urban areas received serious attention. For a long time, 'cities' and 'nature' were seen as mutually exclusive, a view which was reinforced by the removal or covering over of many natural sites and the predominance of built infrastructure in cities. In making cities, however, people often retain some pre-existing trees and vegetation and also introduce new trees and vegetation, often for ornamental reasons and to enhance recreational spaces. It is the tree component of these urban environments that is the focus of this dictionary.

Urban trees, both individually and collectively (together with other woody plants) as the urban forest, are the most conspicuous elements of 'nature' in urban areas. They are symbols of green, healthy cities and have the potential to play a key role in providing high quality urban environments. The benefits of trees in urban environments are many and varied. They include environmental and ecological benefits, physiological benefits for humans, social and psychological benefits for individuals and communities, aesthetic benefits and economic benefits for businesses, people and communities. It is only in about the last 20 years that research into these benefits has begun and many people are not yet fully aware of the breadth of the benefits provided by urban trees. Nevertheless, enough people are aware of the importance of urban trees to have led to a greater recognition of them, as well as increased discussion about and reporting on issues concerned with urban trees.

Nowadays, urban ecosystems, in which urban trees play a key role, are also receiving attention in their own right. Indeed, many people believe that our 21st century cities need to function in more ecologically sustainable ways and that the ecological functioning of cities is as important as other aspects of cities. Urban ecosystems are recognised as being created by humans specifically for dwelling and any serious study in the field of urban ecology needs to be multidisciplinary,