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The urban forest: Created biodiversity

The urban forest is much more diverse than any surrounding natural forest in many parts of the United States. This "Created Biodiversity" is the result of the continuous introduction of new tree species to the urban forest. The three main driving forces behind this urban biodiversity are: Choices of people (based primarily on socioeconomic factors and the desire to plant "something different" in their yards), the heterogeneity of urban habitats where we have formed many new and different habitats that are not necessarily natural environments for native tree species, and the introduction of non-native species which are sometimes potentially invasive and leads to a change in the natural tree composition of the city. This created biodiversity is not a natural assemblage of tree species, but a makeshift community based on human desires and choices. A survey of the urban forest was conducted in 1980 in ten selected Midwest, USA cities. The survey was then replicated in six of these cities. The urban forest composition was then compared to natural forests in the vicinity of the original cities surveyed. It was found that the species richness was much greater in the cities, with 47 to 82 species, than the natural forests in the surrounding area of those surveyed cities which only had 18 to 23 species.

Biography

Charles A Wade is a Professor of Biology at Mott Community College in Flint, Michigan. He is involved in giving lectures and taking up laboratory classes, such as General Biology (non-science majors), Applied Botany, Environmental Science, General Botany, Michigan Flora, Local Trees and Shrubs, General Ecology and Field Biology, over a two-year period. His research interests include urban forest ecology, urban ecosystem services, changes in the urban forests over time and the sustainability of the urban forest vegetation. He is also interested in helping educate people on the selection of the correct tree for the desired location as well as the health and conditions of the urban and peri-urban forest.

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