

DISCUSSION OF THE METRIA SPECIES TRIALS PROJECT  
GOALS, ACTIVITIES, COORDINATION

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ABSTRACT. --This paper is a general outline of the Goals and Purposes of the Metria Species Trials Project. It introduces comments made by a "Panel of Experts" regarding coordinating functions and/or problems as well as some conclusions from the Metria 4 meeting.

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The species of trees that have been selected and discussed during this, the Metria 4 meeting, were presented by those individuals who, because of personal interest, have volunteered to serve as chairman of a committee to research that particular species.

The reason for the Metropolitan Tree Improvement Alliance (METRIA) to be coordinating such an effort can best be defined by stating the purpose as it is set forth in the Outline of Metria Projects, specifically the "Species Trials Project". Two such outlines exist: this one under initiation at this time and the other a "Cultivar Testing Project". These outlines were formulated by Dr. Henry Gerhold as a result of information gathered from the previous three Metria meetings.

SPECIES TRIALS PROJECT

Purpose: "Stimulate trials of under-used species to determine which ones show good promise for wider use in urban plantings, and compile information about desirable and undesirable traits, the most suitable planting sites and regions, and favorable seed sources."

Through the previous meetings of Metria and various other contacts Dr. Gerhold had compiled a list of persons'

names with the particular species of trees which were of interest to them. Letters were mailed to these individuals in 1982 asking if they would serve as a species chairman; what species they would like to concentrate upon; and if they would present a paper for this meeting. There were 30 letters mailed. Of these there were 20 returns and the Metria 4 program represents those who made a definite commitment.

The responsibilities of these committees are also set forth in the outline of the "Species Trials Project":

1. "Review existing knowledge about the species to define the main anticipated problems and opportunities for wider use."

The above was well accomplished by those species chairmen making presentations at this meeting. Their papers will appear in the proceedings.

2. "Seek desirable sources of seed or vegetative propagules".

Many of the species chairmen have already accomplished this in projects they have underway.

3. "Explore ways of having trees grown and made available for trials, and suggest planting designs".

This proceeding committee responsibility is the very next step which must be undertaken so the initial research can get into the field for proper evaluation.

4. "Maintain a list of trial plantings (specifying geographic location, cooperator, and planting date), results, and publications".
5. "Report progress to Metria, cooperators, and anyone else who may want to grow the nursery stock or plant the species on urban sites".

The following, and final, two committee responsibilities as set forth in the outline are in the future as work progresses on the selected species.

It is hoped that anyone who has an interest in any species of tree would become involved in the Metria Species Trials Project. A person may wish to become a species chairman for a tree not presently chosen or they may wish to serve as a committee member of one of the established committees. At the very least, it would be desirable for any-

one having information they could share with one of the species committees, to be inclined to do so.

To explore some of the goals, activities, and coordinating functions and/or problems, a panel to represent disciplines has been selected to define some specifics of Species Trials research:

William Flemer, III

Bill is the director of one of the best known nurseries in the United States - Princeton Wholesale Nurseries. He will represent the nursery aspect of tree improvements and some of the considerations and problems of nursery production.

Dr Frank Santamour

Frank is Research Geneticist at the U.S. National Arboretum, Washington, D.C. He will comment on some technical variables in seed production, testing and cultivar selection.

Dr. Robert Tate

Bob has had extensive background across the United States in Urban Forestry and is well qualified to comment on the municipal problems involved in tree financing, selection and evaluation.

#### METRIA 4 POSTSCRIPTS

Metria is made up of people from many disciplines involved in horticulture/arboriculture. These disciplines, as represented on our species committees, fall into a few well defined categories. They are:

1. Research People (Arboretum, University, U.S.D.A.)
2. Nurserymen
3. Urban Foresters and/or Arborists

The formal as well as informal discussions have yielded a number of conclusions with regard to species trials work. First, it would appear that the research people have the resources to handle initial testing of particular species. They are used to record keeping procedures and habits. They have the greatest access to seed source information and they are acquainted with more intense investigation where small numbers and various strains may exist. This makes the initial investigation more likely to be thorough. They may also be able to maintain seed sources, individual cultivars, seed orchards, etc., and assure the integrity of an improved form.

Second, for a tree to be tested as an economically feasible introduction the nurserymen must find it relatively easy to propagate and grow. This second phase in species improvement can come from Metria cooperating nurserymen formulating testing agreements with the researcher, preferably under the auspices of Metria. Should a possible introduction pass the nursery production test, there then should be a small amount of test plants available for distribution at no cost or a nominal cost to urban areas. It would be at the discretion of the nurseryman whether he felt enough merit existed in the tree under test to go into production and offer additional plant material for order distribution at his fee.

Third, the final thrust as to the merits of an improved species must come from planting the tree under urban conditions. Here the urban forester/arborists must provide the test sites and evaluation record keeping of this phase. Plants coming from the initial research people and from the first nursery tests may already be tested in urban sites, but other testing will occur from the greater nursery production if a particular plant is still being considered as a worthy introduction.

Through these phases of testing and evaluation, record-keeping and reporting should allow for open evaluation, thus helping to assure the merits of the introduction. The results may be anywhere from identifying species and/or seed sources to developing a vegetatively propagated cultivar which offers improved environmental or disease adaptability. Patenting may or may not be deemed necessary, having certified seed may be an option, or nothing more than proving or disproving the merits of the species and getting into use may result.