

NEW TREES FOR METROPOLITAN LANDSCAPES: GETTING THEM FROM THE
EXPERIMENTAL NURSERY TO THE STREET

(Remarks by panel member Robert L. Tate, Asst. Professor of
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I strongly agree with the concept of investigating new, relatively unknown or underused species for use in the metropolitan landscape. Tree planting is popular with citizens and local political decision makers. Urban tree managers must attempt to satisfy this demand in a situation where there are tremendous pressures working against survival. The city tree planting environment has never been ideal but now when maintenance funds are at critically low levels, tree growth and survival are all the more important.

Our chief problem lies in getting the information about improved species transferred to the user. It is, in my opinion, a classic example of the technology transfer process. More about this later, but first let's look at some of the factors that strongly play against us.

1. The method by which urban tree managers purchase trees needs to be changed to work in our advantage. Most cities go out to bid for trees just prior to the planting season. This causes tree growers much difficulty because of the problem of how to forecast demand. Trees take time to grow and nurseries play a difficult guessing game about if what is being planted by cities today is going to be popular in 3-5 years.

A better method for all concerned would be for cities to contract-grow their trees with nurseries. Nurseries could make better use of their resources and cities would be assured of availability. This will require some changes in city purchasing procedures which often do not allow commitment of current funds for future products. Also, there are ways of going around obstacles that can be explored by the cities and cooperating nurseries.

2. Some of the species discussed today, namely box elder and tree of heaven, are simply not going to be planted in cities no matter how good they are because there are city ordinances in many communities which prohibit their planting on public property. We need to be aware of this and work with political decision makers to allow exceptions to be made. It may be that a species with great promise can't be fully utilized in cities because of legal problems. We had better know this before we commit ourselves to a species.

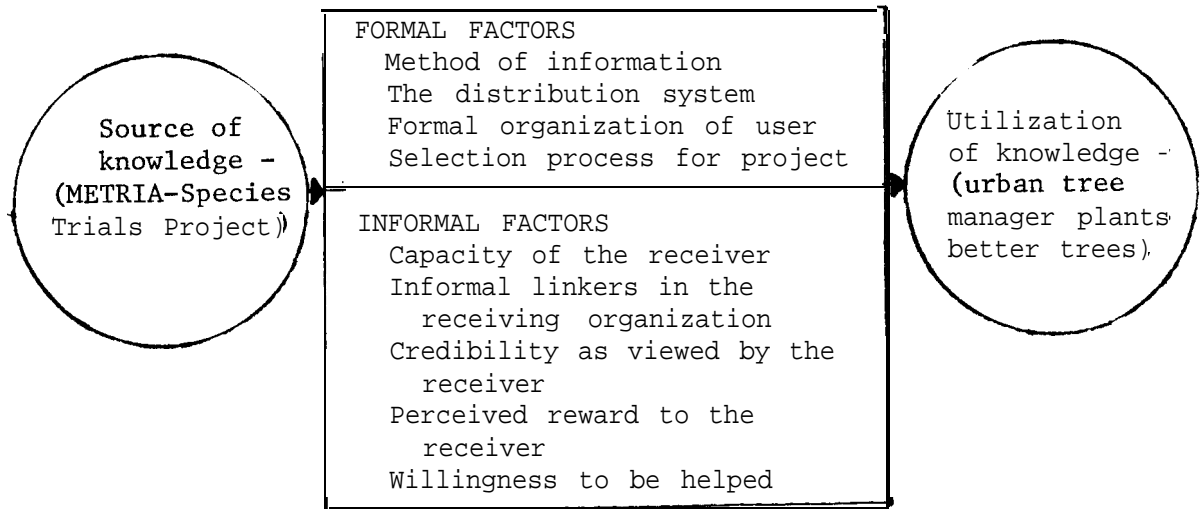
3. Many people in our user group do not have the education and/or experience in horticulture or plant science necessary to properly take advantage of our product. Unfortunately, the person in charge of buying trees in many cases opens a nursery catalog and somewhat arbitrarily

picks the first maple he or she comes to (Have you looked at how many maples there are being sold in the nursery trade today?) and that is that. These people need to be alerted to our efforts through a strong educational campaign.

Urban tree managers often rely on first-hand knowledge and communication with their peers. If we are going to be successful in getting better trees planted in the urban environment we are going to have to be willing to get the word out in a variety of methods. We might have to establish test plantings in the urban environment right along the street so they can be seen and evaluated by the tree manager. We may have to enlist the aid of a few key urban tree managers to allow us to set up test plantings.

4. If we find and test species that appear to have promise, we are going to have to make absolutely certain they are available in quantity. Availability is extremely important. Urban tree managers won't buy our introductions if nurseries won't grow them. Nurseries won't grow them for very long if they can't sell them and the best tree in the world won't do a bit of good if it isn't planted. We may have to help in the development of the supply as well as the demand.

I don't think any of these factors or problems I've discussed are insurmountable but they will require some hard work by all of us. We can't just stand back and be proud, that we found and tested a species that has great promise and leave the rest of the equation to somebody else to handle. In this respect we all need to become much better acquainted with the technology transfer model developed by Jolly and Creighton (1974) and illustrated as follows:



Transfer Mechanism

The problems I have discussed can be readily fit into the formal factors of the transfer mechanism of the model. An awareness of this model is absolutely essential if we are to accomplish our aim of getting better trees planted in the urban environment.

LITERATURE CITED

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