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Role of Street trees in Urban Landscape: A Resource Audit

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Abstract

Street trees first considered as an ornamentation of the city landscape while brings unique identity to the city. Sri Lanka being a bio diversity hotspot large variety of trees and shrubs were available and used as part of urban landscape ornamentation. Choice of street trees based on agroclimatic zone, cultural identities, characteristics and multipurpose nature of the species. Main focus of study was to explore the role of street trees in ornamentation of cities and identify uniqueness brought to the city landscape, find out ecosystem services provided by the street trees and find out socially, culturally, economically and environmentally suitable trees species for cities located in different agroclimatic zones of Sri Lanka. Case study approach was instrumental for this study. Main data collection tools were field observations, in-depth interviews with city dwellers (45), visitors (35), officers of municipal council and urban development authority (10) and scientists (3) and policy makers (3) and maps of the cities considered for the study. Present study based on the street tree profile of 5 main cities (Colombo, Galle, Matara, Anuradhapura and Kandy), town (Bandarawela, Kaluthara, Hambantota, Rathnapura, Peradeniya and Batticaloa) and small town (Suriyawewa, Ambalongoda, Bandaragama, Mawenella, Aluthgama and Mirissa). Street trees of the main cities were ornamented by culturally imported tree species while street of the town areas was appeared with diverse mixture of trees. In Contrast economically importuned trees were common in small towns. Typology of street trees were developed using seven dimensions; social benefits, functional properties, resistant to urban environment, environmental constraints, cultural constraints and limitation constraints. 6 species were identified as the most suitable for street posadas among 15 species found in street trees. Street trees played multifunctional role in urban landscape other than its themed ornamentation role.

Keywords: Ecosystem services, Street, trees, Urban landscape