

Disclosure from our Urban Forest Professional

Community vs. Urban Forests

The Envirothon folks in the USA have combined the notions of urban and community forests. They may have done this because so many senior-government programs (federal and state) have been developed to combine urban and community forests under the same umbrella. Doing this might work for the Americans but it does not work for us in Canada. We have developed the concepts of urban forests and community forests along quite different lines. In Canada, urban forests are generally defined as all the trees in the city/town. We could thus say that all urban forests are community forests in the sense that they co-inhabit the same ecosystem as the people in communities. However, the concept of community forest implies strong involvement of the community, in terms mainly of civic engagement, in the affairs of managing the forest in question, and that is definitely not the case across all of Canada. Many urban forests are essentially managed by professionals in the employ of, or contracted to, the municipal government, with little real community involvement.

On the other hand, the concept of community forest in Canada is one mainly of rural or hinterland forests managed by and for communities (as opposed to provincial governments and big forest-products companies). For example, the county forests of southern Ontario are considered a form of community forest, the community forests of BC (numbering about sixty) are largely rural woodlands, and the one community forest in Nova Scotia - the Medway Community Forest in the southwest - concerns 15K hectares of rural Crown land (decidedly not urban). So, there will be learning outcomes for urban forests and different ones for community forests.

Forestry vs. Forest

“Forestry” is a profession. Because of these inconsistencies, I will reframe the theme from “Urban/Community Forestry” to “Urban Forests and Community Forests”



LEARNING OUTCOMES: URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTS

Understand the concept of sustainability in the context of urban forests and community forests in Canada.

Understand how Canadians value urban forests and community forests - what benefits do they see in these types of forests? Describe the values in terms of economic, social, health, and environmental benefits. Understand the kinds of tools available to estimate tree services and benefits.

Understand the range of approaches and tools used in managing urban forests and community forests in Canada.

Understand what a forest management plan is, what it typically includes, and how it serves as an essential tool in managing urban forests and community forests.

Understand the challenges in managing urban forests and community forests. These include such factors as invasive species, insects and diseases, climate change, fire, air pollution, lack of management capability, and land-use change, infrastructure encroachment.

Understand how urban forests and community forests are measured and inventoried, and what the information is used for.

Develop a rudimentary understanding of the main tree species (along with their key characteristics) used in urban forests in Canada.

