

Memorial Tree Planting.

Street trees have been an integral part of the urban landscape. It was the Italian Renaissance and French Baroque influences that introduced the concept of planting rows and avenues of trees (Chevallier, 1983).

Several studies have shown the potential of the urban forest in providing a physical environment and biological benefits. (Aylor 1972; Smith 1990; Mc Person 1994; Nowak 1994; Heisler et al. 1995; Neville 1996; Novak et al. 2002).

South Africa and the local Councils appear not to have a recognized memorial tree planting policy as recent research has found that most local government municipalities do not even have an urban forestry policy to deal with the trees within the built environment part of which would be a memorial tree planting policy. This lack of policy must be seen in the light of South Africa's signing of the COP agreement and their undertaking to address the climate change requirements.

The urban forestry policy should consist of the following: -

- Vision Statement.
- Purpose of the Plan
- Sustainable Urban Forest. – Communities must acknowledge trees provide a wide range of benefits. In maintaining the net benefits overtime goal, the regeneration of urban forests requires intervention and management by humans. Sustainable urban forests exist within defined geographic and political boundaries.
- Vegetative Resources – Canopy Cover, Age distribution, Species Mix, Indigenous Vegetation.
- Community Framework- Public Cooperation, Involvement of private and institutional landowners, Green Industry, Neighbourhood Action *including Memorial Trees*, Trees as a community resource, regional cooperation.
- Resource Management – Citywide Management Plan, Funding, Staffing, Assessment Tools, Protection of existing trees, Species, and site selection. Tree Care Standards. Citizen Safety. Recycling.

Several South African non-profit organizations undertake memorial tree planting on behalf of families, but this is done in natural forest rehabilitation outside the urban boundaries of municipalities. Others offer fruit tree planting, while olive tree planting in memory is also offered. The fruit and olive oil is made available to communities close by or sold and the funds are used to uplift the communities in proximity. Cape Town and well as Knysna Plett combined Arbour Day planting with trees in memory of lost ones within memorial parks and cemeteries. These memorial trees are mostly planted in circles to symbolize the circle of life and are fitted with green ribbons

The planting of trees in an urban environment can be done within public open spaces/parks or strategic beauty spots or along verges/pavements. Incorporated into this process is either a name plaque mounted on a wall close by or a memorial stone set up at the base of the tree. Or in the case of the trees planted on a verge in

Pinetown, we mounted names and surnames within concrete rings around the base of the trees. This has the advantage of protecting the tree stem from being ring barked during maintenance and allowing the planting of indigenous plants as well. Other naming options could be benches installed with the nameplate of the person being remembered placed in the shade produced by the tree.

Applications on a duly supplied form to be submitted to the applicable Council for authority to plant a tree/tree, the site chosen, and species selected should also be included. Some of the overseas councils insist that the person being remembered must have been a citizen of the town in question even if the person making the application resides outside the area and is required to submit proof thereof.

The Council to whom the application has been made either allows for the planting of the tree/trees after due consideration of species and spacings the Council must provide plans of the services within the designated planting area. It must be noted that the Council By-Laws must also be consulted to ensure that this tree planting is allowed. The Council can also undertake to plant the selected tree with a tree guard for a fee and undertake to do reasonable maintenance. They do stress that the fee does not include the replacement tree should the planted specimen not survive.

The containers containing the ashes of the deceased must be biodegradable and should be included in the soil preparation before the specimen tree is planted. No plastic or similar materials are permitted to encase the ashes being buried.

Consideration must also be given to planting flowering perennial plants within the concrete ring surrounding the base of the tree.

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