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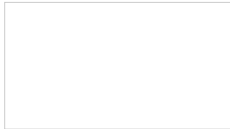
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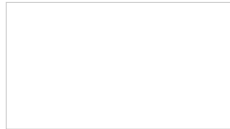


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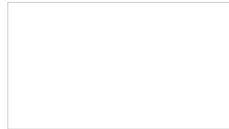
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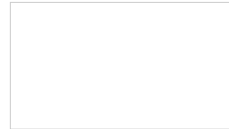
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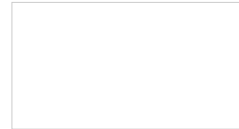
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Mapping the urban forest one tree at a time

By [Tannith Cattermole](#)
06:02 May 3, 2010



The Urban Forest Map relies on community contributions to build information sharing, and communicate the importance of the urban forest

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How do we get a good picture of what trees are where, how they are contributing to the environment, and what problems they might be susceptible to in today's changing world? The main problem with recording this vital information is (to borrow a line) "tree people like planting trees, they don't like entering data." So why not throw the task open to the local community? The Urban Forest Map is a one-stop repository using information contributed from any willing group or individual and aims to engage community participation to build a complete, dynamic picture of the urban forest.

Anybody can add, edit or find a tree they know in San Francisco and the [Urban Forest Map](#) will use the information to quantify the environmental benefits the trees are providing. Typing in a tree species will bring up a map of San Francisco with dots indicating all the recorded trees of that type, plus greenhouse benefits measured in pounds of carbon dioxide reduced, water benefits in gallons of water conserved, energy benefits in kilowatt-hours of energy conserved, tons of pollutants they are reducing and the total economic benefit of each in U.S. dollars.

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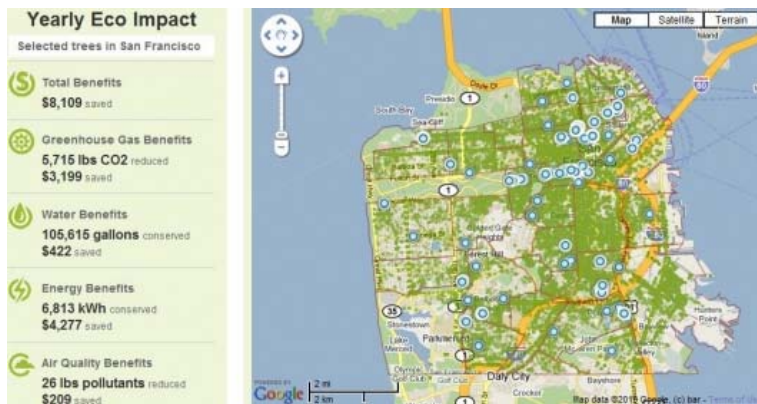
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Until now, such detailed information on tree distribution has been sorely absent or woefully incomplete. The Urban Forest map began with two urban foresters; one working from the community organization perspective, and the other from the government research side. They wanted to build a picture of the urban forest; where trees are, what species are represented, how old and healthy they are, distribution of trees geographically, but were frustrated that such valuable information was not easily available. Despite being of value a wide variety of people from town planners, city foresters, ecologists, landscape architects, to tree advocacy groups and residents, software technology or lack thereof, coupled with difficulties coordinating government departments and failure to record trees on private property at all meant no clear picture could be gained.

So they set to work developing a web-based open-source collaborative project with support and funding from [Autodesk](#), [San Francisco's Department of Public Works](#) and [Friends of the Urban Forest](#).

Following a grant awarded by the the [California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection \(CalFire\)](#) funded by [Proposition 84](#) they expanded the project and is now a collaboration of government, non-profits, businesses and individuals.

The information gathered will be of vital use to urban foresters and city planners in better managing trees, allowing them to track and combat tree pests and diseases, and also plan future tree plantings. Additionally climatologists will be able to use the information to better understand the effects of urban forests on climates, and students and scientists can use the site to learn about the role of trees in the urban ecosystem.

It's also fun to use and interactive and while it works to improve information sharing, it also communicates the value of the urban forest, and engages communities in creating and taking care of greener, urban environments.

We hope to see this initiative spread to other cities.

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Beware the Dark Side!

I can see the good example of the concept that this idea holds. It is wonderful idea with many good consequences and it should be pursued. I would guess that this concept was created by good people with a pure desire to give back to, and help protect the Earth. But in this world there are two types of people, the "Givers" and the "Takers".

Without some sort of data protection. I can see where this information could be

used to exploit the trees instead of protecting them. Imagine giving hit and run loggers targets to harvest their profits, or terrorist wackos a road map to destroy our natural beauty.

I believe the majority of the people of the Earth are "Givers". But it is our nature to be mostly passive as well. We need to come together and tell the "Takers" that there will be an equal share for all. Please be careful with the information we provide them with. Remember what they have done to the economics of this planet! They never suffer, we do, unless we stand up to them or think things thru thoroughly.

 **Sharpfocus** - May 3, 2010 @ 10:05 am PDT

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