

B G Hibberd *Urban Forestry Practice*, Forestry Commission Handbook 5, HMSO, London, 1989. Pp. 150, 20 × 21 cm. Many photographs, diagrams and tables, index. Price £11.50 net. paperback. ISBN 0-11-710273-3

Review by Robert Tregay

This handbook arose out of the first UK conference on urban forestry held at Wolverhampton in 1988, and gives practical advice on how to establish trees, especially on difficult sites, and how to manage them for a variety of purposes. It draws heavily on research work funded by the Department of the Environment and carried out at the Forestry Commission's Research Station at Alice Holt. It is the research-based guidance, as well as the broad coverage of the practical issues involved in establishing trees, that makes this book so valuable.

As defined in the book, Urban Forestry embraces 'trees grown in and close to urban areas for their value in the landscape, for recreation, and including trees in streets, avenues, urban parks, on land reclaimed from previous industrial use, as well as those in urban woodlands and gardens'. This broad definition, amplified by illustrations of trees in hard-paved areas, 'Leylandii' hedges, ornamental parks and the internal shopping mall at Milton Keynes, will not suit all those concerned with trees in towns. Horticulturalists, arboriculturalists, park managers, landscape architects and those ecologists involved with creating new woodland habitats may wonder whether their professions have been subsumed by forestry.

The book is more strictly concerned with the establishment and management of trees as individuals, rather than masses of trees as systems or 'forests' in the more widely accepted sense. Thus no landscape planning perspective is taken on how trees are put together to make landscapes (or forests in the accepted sense).

These observations aside, this book should be welcomed by all those concerned with the use of trees in improving the urban environment. After all, much urban tree planting has an appallingly poor record of success, and the scientific expertise and practical experience reflected in the handbook encompasses some of the soundest advice available. The book covers community involvement, preparation and planting, choice of species, planting stock, establishment and early maintenance, as well as aftercare and management. There are sections on pruning, diseased and damaged trees, trees in relation to buildings, the management of existing woodlands and the potential for timber use from urban trees. The advice is comprehensive and succinct and the book transfers the results of lengthy research projects into valuable and easily assimilated guidelines for practitioners.

Essential reading for all parks managers, landscape architects, arboriculturalists, voluntary environmental groups and others concerned with urban trees.

N D G James. *The Forester's Companion* (4th Edition). Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1989. Pp. 310, 21.5 × 13.5 cms, Tables and diagrams, index. Price £30.00 hardback. £11.95 paperback. ISBN 0-631-16258-5

Review by Donald McPhillimy

The Forester's Companion is a lovely book. It's the forester's list of lists with the same fascination as a Pears Encyclopaedia. It provides essential information in a concise

accessible manner, yet behind all the lists lies the ancient, romantic world of forestry seen in glimpses between the lines.

The forest kingdom of the Forester's Companion is populated with Hoppus feet (Chapter IX), large and small faggots (page 91), furlongs, chains, gunters, poles, rods and perches (page 103), Daphne (the classic poison of the ancients) (page 119), traditional earth-covered charcoal kilns (page 178) and bark for tanning, which should be peeled as soon as the sap rises (page 297). One pictures a tweed-clad character from Thomas Hardy's *Woodlanders* living deep in the forest (ancient, semi-natural) tying six small faggots to make one large faggot before stripping some more oak bark. In the late afternoon as the rays of milky April sunshine touch and illuminate the forest floor he tends his earth-covered kiln. We must not let those filofaxed, sharp-suited modernists at the Forestry Commission with their computer-technology glossy reports completely sever the links with the ancient craft of forestry. Long may the Forester's Companion survive.

Survive and prosper it should, as it is a unique handbook stuffed full of concise useful information contained in such chapters as Nursery Work, Coppice and Underwood, Timber Measuring, Diseases and Pests, Utilization, Valuation and Sale of Timber, Grants and Felling Licences, Education and Training, Safety in Forestry to name just 9 out of 33. Each chapter is treated in the same way with headings, sub-headings and lists of points so that the key information can be extracted quickly and efficiently. Illustrations are used very sparingly, notably in a pictorial list of insect pests. Further illustrated lists would be useful, for example, of the various systems of timber conversion or the effects of different pests and diseases upon trees.

Wildlife is not given any inherent value even when the species is rare but is treated pragmatically based on its effect upon the trees. Hence examples are given of 'definitely useful' birds such as blackbird, hedge-sparrow, night-jar and owl and 'definitely harmful' such as blackgame, capercaillie, crossbill and jay. This is not going to break down barriers.

I am finding the information in the chapters on nursery work, the tending of plantations and utilisation particularly useful with little jewels of information surfacing each time they are read. Did you know that alder will last almost indefinitely under water, or that horse chestnut is used for fruit storage racks as the wood will absorb water? Did you know that poplar accounts for 50% of the legal cases concerning damage caused by tree roots?

There are a few little quibbles. Why are tree shelters not mentioned in a discussion on deer damage (page 115)? Why is the permeability of shelterbelts not listed as a factor? Equivalent Scottish, Welsh and N. Irish organisations such as Scottish Conservation Projects are often not listed. And why is Scottish Woodland Ltd listed under Organisations concerned with Business Aspects of Forestry together with FICGB and TGUK rather than with the other commercial companies?

However, the last word should come from the final chapter, 'A Calendar of Forestry Work'. December: 'Continue planting so long as the weather permits. In hard winter, fell, thin, prune and brash. If heavy rain reveals areas in young plantations which need draining, grips should be cut and drains opened up.' Some days it's good to be inside with the Forester's Companion.