

Urban street trees

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Part of the Tranzinfo Hot Topics series, this issue offers a selection of recent material on urban street trees. Urban vegetation helps to make cities more resilient to the [impacts of climate change](#), and to combat the [urban heat island effect](#), a phenomenon where cities and suburban areas experience much hotter temperatures than surrounding rural areas due to less green cover and more hard surfaces which absorb, store and radiate heat. Both [heat](#) and [air pollution](#), which have been linked to significant health problems and increased mortality, can be mitigated by planting more urban vegetation. The greening of urban areas can take many forms, from tiny [pocket-sized forests](#), to [green tram tracks](#), to the 'rewilding' of disused industrial sites or [infrastructure](#). Australia's [Biodiversity Council](#) has recently highlighted the importance of cities as important refuges for native plants and animals.

Urban street tree planting is increasingly being used as a way to promote environmental and human health, and to make urban areas more resilient to the effects of climate change. Many local councils and governments across Australia are implementing street tree programs. However, a one-size-fits all approach is problematic, and careful planning is required to achieve successful, healthy street trees. Recent Australian research has focused on the best strategies for approaching street plantings and species selection. Wrong decisions can create unintended side effects, future problems, and low levels of [public acceptance](#).

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[How this new Melbourne suburb is dodging baking heat in summer](#)

ABC News, 6 January 2026.

A new housing estate in Melbourne's outer south-east, one of Victoria's fastest-growing areas, has been recognised with a National Growth Areas Alliance award for its Green Streets project, which has a target of 30 per cent canopy cover and a minimum of two trees planted per residential lot.

[More trees: urban cooling and greening programs](#)

Victorian Government, 2026.

The More Trees for Melbourne initiative supports tree planting and innovative urban greening projects that cool streets and public spaces, improve comfort and amenity, and strengthen connections between people and nature in heat vulnerable areas.

[Remaking the electric line clearance regulations](#)

Victorian Government, February 2026.

The Victorian Government is proposing changes to the power line clearance regulations that would result in smaller distances between trees and power lines. This would result in more tree cover. The government is proposing a trial to collect data to ensure the new minimum distances are safe.

[City of Perth grows its global reputation as Tree City of the World](#)

City of Perth, 2 April 2026.

The City of Perth has been recognised as a 2025 Tree City of the World for the third consecutive year for its commitment to growing and caring for its urban forest, meeting five core standards to earn the title as part of the Tree Cities of the World Program: clear responsibility for tree care, strong policies guiding tree and forest management, up-to-date assessments of tree canopy, dedicated resources to support a tree management plan, and an annual community celebration of trees.

[Blacktown City streets go from barren to blooming](#)

Blacktown City Council, 22 July 2025.

Blacktown City Council is planting trees along streets where a focus on motorists once left them barren, following the findings of its award-winning research that street tree plantings could lead to a cooler, healthier and safer community.

[WALGA climate Ready Street Tree trial project underway](#)

Western Australian Local Government Association, 7 October 2025.

WALGA's Climate Ready Street Tree Trials project - an urban greening demonstration project - aims to test underutilised tree species that are more likely to thrive under future climate conditions.

[New Urban Greening Strategy to expand Adelaide's tree canopy and cool the metro](#)

South Australian Government Ministerial Media Statement, 20 March 2025.

A new [Urban Greening Strategy](#) for metropolitan Adelaide aims to increase tree canopy cover from 17 per cent to 30 per cent, cool urban areas, and boost biodiversity.

['It's slipped off the radar': why are there fewer street trees in regional towns across Australia?](#)

The Guardian, 4 January 2024.

Many regional towns in Australia lack tree cover - crucial to mitigating the effects of extreme heat - due to the prioritisation of cars, according to experts. Tree planting in regional areas can initially be met with strong community opposition, and in many areas tree planting efforts have been mixed.

[Encouraging residents' stewardship of street trees in Australia's capital city, Canberra](#)

MH Choy, P Kanowski & R Pearse, Australian Forestry, vol. 87, no. 4, 2024.

An urban forest strategy was introduced in Canberra to foster the role of urban forests as nature-based solutions to climate change. One of its goals is to engage residents in the stewardship of neighbourhood street trees, which requires an understanding of residents' perceptions of and attitudes towards street trees and their willingness to play a stewardship role. This research explores these issues for Canberra residents who engaged with the pilot Street Forestry Program and considers implications for initiatives encouraging stewardship of urban street trees.

[Street tree master plan](#)

City of Sydney 2023.

The plan provides a coordinated and strategic approach to future planting and ensures that street trees provide a green and resilient future.

The street tree master plan is a critical tool to proactively manage urban forest. Trees like all living things, grow, age and eventually die. It's been carefully developed to guide future street tree planting.

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Research

[We know how to cool our cities and towns. So why aren't we doing it?](#)

The Conversation, 30 January 2026.

Australia has the expertise and the technologies to cool cities, yet we are lagging behind countries where large-scale heat mitigation projects, such as cool islands and sponge city programs, are already reducing urban temperatures, according to a Melbourne academic.

[Tree planting can combat urban heat but some neighbourhoods are falling behind](#)

University of Sydney, 11 February 2026.

Sydney communities may be missing out on crucial tree planting projects intended to combat urban heat, leaving western and eastern parts of Greater Sydney with less protection from extreme heat, a University of Sydney-led [study](#) has revealed.

[More trees where they matter, please](#)

MIT News, 24 February 2026.

Tree cover varies widely within cities, and is generally connected to wealth levels, according to a [study](#) by MIT researchers that examined street tree cover in a cross-section of cities, including Sydney, on four continents.

[New AI tool optimises tree species and planting for cooling urban streets](#)

Queensland University of Technology, 16 February 2026.

A [new tool](#) developed at QUT uses AI to optimise species and location of tree plantings in urban areas at risk of overheating during extreme heat.

[The simple fix that will cool our streets – if only we get it right](#)

The Age, 10 April 2026.

Healthy urban trees are known to be a crucial defence against lethal heatwaves, but councils and governments are planting too few saplings, placing them in the wrong places, and failing to water them. New [research](#) published in Nature Communications shows that while street trees often fail to thrive, the solutions to help urban oases flourish are devastatingly simple.

[Trees and greenery can cool cities by as much as 18°C – but only if they're the right type](#)

The Conversation, 1 June 2026.

As cities around the world plant more trees to cope with rising urban heat, new Australian [research](#) shows that 'one-size fits all' strategies can fail. More vegetation is not automatically better, and climate, street width and airflow all shape whether vegetation improves comfort or creates unintended side effects, according to the study.

[A review of residents' perceptions of urban street trees: addressing ambivalence to promote climate resilience](#)

JR Walters, TL Bell, S Pfautsch, Land, vol. 14, no. 3, 2025.

Street trees are a unique component of the urban forest. They provide multiple ecosystem services but can damage property and infrastructure, so they are frequently met with residents' ambivalence. Global attempts to expand urban tree canopy cover to improve climate resilience are increasingly reliant on residents to establish and maintain street trees. Success depends on community support, which requires an understanding of how residents perceive trees located outside their homes.

[Most bike lanes in inner Melbourne have less than 40% tree cover – that'll get worse, new maps show](#)

The Conversation, 14 April 2025.

A new [study](#) investigated how the City of Melbourne's transport and urban forestry strategies are aligned to achieve public health goals. The study finds that while the City of Melbourne embeds the social determinants of health framework into its policies, it can do more to strengthen linkages between policies to achieve public health goals. Additionally, cycling infrastructure and tree canopy can be better aligned to respond to interconnected health and climate challenges.

[Increasing urban vegetation could have saved over 1.1m lives in two decades](#)

Monash University, 1 May 2025.

Increasing urban vegetation by 30 per cent could save over one-third of all heat related deaths globally, according to a 20-year [modelling study](#) conducted by Monash University scientists.

[Cooling ability of trees during heatwaves overestimated](#)

Government News, 15 August 2024.

Conventional climate models overestimate the ability of trees to cool urban areas during heat waves by 60 per cent, according to a UNSW [study](#). The effectiveness of large-scale tree-planting as a heatwave mitigation strategy may not meet expectations, emphasizing the need for strategy refinement during heatwaves, according to the authors.

[Public preferences for street tree characteristics: A best-worst scaling experiment](#)

C Doll, C Rollins, K Rehdanz, J Meyerhoff, M Burton & D Pannell, Urban Forestry & Urban Greening, vol. 104, February 2025.

Because of the environmental and social benefits associated with urban greening, many cities around the world are implementing strategies to increase tree canopy cover, including along residential streets. However, procedures for developing and implementing these strategies do not always factor in public preferences, which can limit public acceptance. This paper explores public preferences for different characteristics of street trees. Where past studies have relied on capturing perceptions of street trees using rating scales for relatively few attributes, this study apply best-worst scaling, which is a type of choice experiment, to assess preferences for 16 different tree characteristics.

[We need urban trees more than ever – here's how to save them from extreme heat](#)

The Conversation, 25 September 2023.

Research by the University of Western Sydney shows that access to water is crucial for the survival of urban street trees during heatwaves.

This means that urban greening programs need to find ways to provide trees with enough water when rainfall is unreliable.

The researchers suggest exploring new techniques such as passive irrigation storage pits and raingardens.

[Beyond the luxury effect: Individual and structural drivers lead to 'urban forest inequity' in public street trees in Melbourne, Australia](#)

CG Threlfall, LD Gunn, M Davern & D Kendal, Landscape and Urban Planning, vol. 218, Feb 2022, p. 104311.

Urban trees are increasingly being used to help cities adapt to climate change, improve health and wellbeing, and promote biodiversity. Yet these benefits are distributed unequally, mirroring the uneven distribution of the urban forest in many cities. Contrasting theories have been proposed to explain these observed patterns that focus either on the economic wherewithal of individuals (the 'luxury effect'), or the outcome of structural factors such as municipal decision-making processes. This paper explores patterns across 10 municipal authorities in greater Melbourne to compare the relative importance of these competing mechanisms.

[Push to convert thousands of CBD parking spots into green space](#)

The Age, 30 November 2022.

A [plan](#) by RMIT researchers would see 10,000 on-street parking spots in Melbourne's CBD converted into green spaces, helping to protect the city from flooding and heatwaves.

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