



# Tree and Soil Research Fund

## NEWSLETTER

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## Changing our Industry with Research

Landscape architects often draw details, write specifications, and try to convince clients to support ideas that might run counter to conventional wisdom or standard industry practice and we may be putting forth ideas that are not supported by research, further embedding myth into practice. In the area of storm water design, for example, we may propose details and specifications that we believe work, or we may be forced to accept concepts that are required by the engineering professions or local regulations, even though our

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## Webinar Highlights:

### THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT IN THE NURSERY: TAGGING TREES AND ENFORCING SPECIFICATIONS



*Nursery inspection is much more than finding good looking trees*

The September TREE Fund webinar on tagging trees in the nursery was a huge success with 1,086 people registered. James Urban, FASLA and Paul Josey, ASLA presented a range of issues and tree defects that landscape architects may encounter when making nursery visits to approve tree quality. Tree quality was discussed both above and below the ground with practical ways to inspect for important tree quality issues. Since

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# Changing Our Industry with Research

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experience may suggest that they are flawed. Resolving these conflicts and implementing better practices is difficult within the context of project design without extraordinary efforts and a supportive client. Having our professional organization help establish the best practices can be more effective.

The International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) has set a good example for the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) on how to couple academic research with peer reviewed, ISA produced, best practice manuals to change professional practice. Research was key to these efforts. TREE Fund has been an integral part of this process, supporting research into relevant industry questions. While some landscape architecture firms have funded their own research programs, publishing in peer reviewed journals is difficult and acceptance by the profession is challenging. Scientific protocol relies on replicated experiments with independent research work exploring the many nuances of a particular question.

A good example of why peer reviewed and replicated science is critical is the evolution of gravel and sand based structural soils. The initial research of gravel based structural soil was excellent, involving years of effort with controlled studies. Once completed, there was limited confirming/replicating research. Some of the studies that were completed indicated that the approach could have significant issues that were



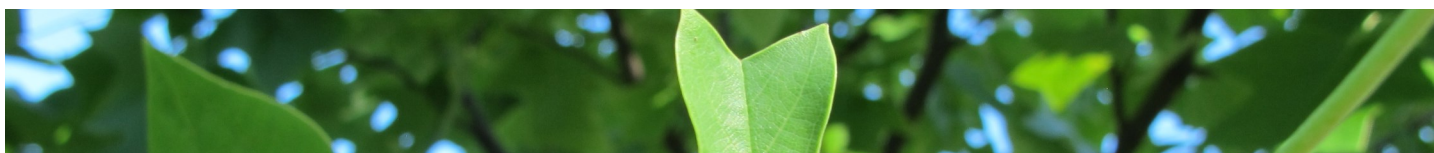
missed in the original work. When moved into the built landscape, these issues became more apparent and gravel based structural soil often did not live up to expectations. Sand based structural soil, on the other hand, was moved into practice with little or no research, relying on limited observations in a small set of case studies. Later observations of large numbers of trees planted in sand based structural soils showed inconsistent results. While both ideas are still in use, installed case studies and peer reviewed studies are building evidence and confirming flaws in each approach.

How do we know what are the better practices and how do we set industry standards and inform our

policy makers with peer reviewed science? The greater the number of research efforts into a given question, and diversity of the research approaches, the greater the reliability of the conclusions. This takes significant time, research dollars and independent research entities working on the same question, but it is necessary to change the direction of any particular industry practice. TREE Fund is here for the long haul to find answers that move industry practices forward.



**James Urban,**  
**FASLA**  
Urban Trees + Soils  
Annapolis, MD





## Team ASLA and the Tour des Trees 2019



Team ASLA (l-r): Kris May, ASLA and David Gorden, FASLA (not pictured J.B. Lupton)

For the second year, Team ASLA took on the Tour des Trees and its three riders were part of the peloton of 80, in the frequently hilly, often winding and almost always hot roads of

Of course, the purpose of the ride is to raise money to support TREE Fund, and that it did—with over \$385,000 being raised this year. Team ASLA specifically directs its donations to the Tree and Soil Research Fund (TSR Fund), which supports research of relevance to landscape architects. \$13,762 of the Team's nearly \$14,600 in donations went to the TSR Fund, bringing its level to **\$65,508!**

It is always such a pleasure riding for tree research and education. Please consider joining Team ASLA next year in Colorado August 29 – September 4, 2020. You won't regret it.

- David Gorden, FASLA

Tennessee and Kentucky. Over 440 miles, the challenging days were made less so by the wonderful support crew that kept us well hydrated and cared for. Masseuses and mechanics always at the ready, so our muscles and machines would be tended to by skilled hands.

Our fellow riders came from around the country as well as Canada and the UK. Some have been riding for years and others for the first time. Many work directly with trees and many don't, but all have a passion for cycling and supporting trees.



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the contractual basis for requiring contractors and nurseries to correct defects relies on a strong plant quality specification, the presenters provided a link to an open source, planting specification, with accompanying details. Particular emphasis of the webinar was correcting defects rather than outright rejection of trees.

There were far too many questions to answer in the lively Q&A discussion. Jim and Paul provided written answers to all the questions that remained at the end of the session. A large number of questions focused on how to challenge the nursery industry to simply provide better quality stock. This resulted in a suggested course of action, 'The Politics of Getting Better Trees', by James Urban in the written Q&A response.

Visit TREE Fund's Webinar Archive to watch this webinar, access a PDF of the presentation and read Jim and Paul's written Q&A response by going to [www.treefund.org](http://www.treefund.org).

# Support the Tree and Soil Research Fund



As the profession of landscape architecture moves toward 'evidence based' practice, it is clear that much more research in this area is needed. TREE Fund, an international, nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering urban tree research and education, established the **Tree and Soil Research Fund (TSR Fund)** to research questions directly related to the

design, installation and management of trees in urban landscapes and support the work of landscape architects. TREE Fund has established an initial endowment goal for the TSR Fund of \$500,000 and will award research grants of \$25,000 per year, in perpetuity, once this endowment level is secured.

Supported research will include research into questions about the design, specification, installation, best practices and long-term management of plants and soil in urban landscapes. Landscape architects and colleagues within the landscape industry who value the benefits of healthy, mature trees in our cities, are encouraged to support the TSR Fund endowment campaign today.

## MAKE A GIFT:

Donate directly to the TSR Fund by clicking on the Donate Now button on TREE Fund's website at [www.treefund.org](http://www.treefund.org).

## BUILD OUR NETWORK:

Help build our list of supporters by getting your colleagues, friends and clients to join the TSR Fund mailing list! Email Monika Otting ([motting@treefund.org](mailto:motting@treefund.org)) to sign up or for more information.

## Contact Us:

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