

Observe a Street Tree: Habitat

What is a street tree?

Street trees are planted trees that line streets. You can often find them in small patches of dirt, mulch, or grass, called tree pits, along the sidewalk.

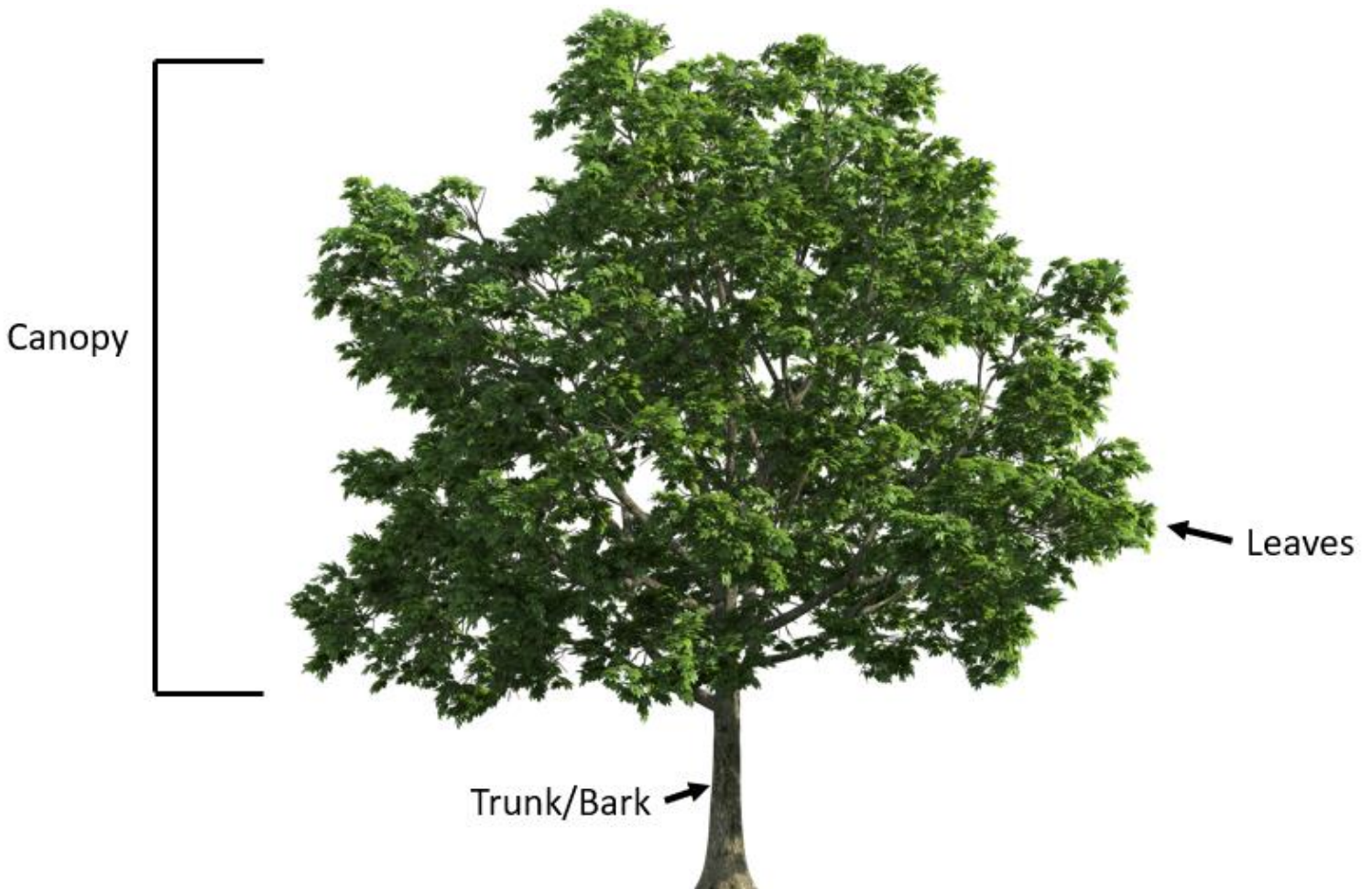
Why are street trees important?

Street trees provide many benefits to people. In the summer, their shade offers a cool place to rest. The green **canopy** of trees is lighter than the dark streets and buildings. Because they are a lighter color, they absorb less heat and help cool down the city. Street trees can also beautify an area and create more pleasant streets. Trees provide important **habitat** for wildlife. Their leaves, branches, bark, trunk, and even roots offer an excellent place for wildlife like mammals, birds, insects, spiders, and even some reptiles to live!

What is a habitat?

A **habitat** is a place where a living thing (plant, animal, or fungus) lives. All good habitats provide food, water, and shelter. Street trees make good habitats because they provide food and shelter in cities where there usually is not much natural space. Trees have branches, roots, and holes where wildlife can shelter. The leaves, fruit, and seeds are a good source of food for wildlife to eat. Trees also provide habitat for animals that are food for other animals. For example, many birds will eat insects in the bark or on the leaves.

Parts of a tree:



Observe a street tree habitat:

Directions:

- Choose a street tree that is easily accessible and safe to observe.
- Answer the following questions about your tree!

What kind of shelter do you observe on this tree? (holes, branches, nests, bark, etc.)

What kind of food can your tree provide? (leaves, seeds, insects, flowers, etc.)

What kind of wildlife do you expect to live in your tree? (birds, squirrels, insects, racoons, etc.)

Observe your tree:

For each of the following categories, answer the following questions:

- What kind of wildlife do you see?
- What is that animal doing?
- How is the animal using the tree for habitat or food?

Branches:

Bark:

Soil/ground:

Leaves:

Answer the following questions based on your observations:

Did you observe any wildlife nearby your tree? How might that wildlife use your tree?

Do you think there will be different wildlife at different times of day? Why or why not?

What wildlife might you expect to find at night?

How would weather affect the wildlife that uses your tree?

Come back later and see if you can observe any other wildlife using your tree! Or observe another tree in your neighborhood!

How to care for street trees in your neighborhood!

Water:

Street trees get thirsty too! Trees need 15 to 20 gallons of water every week!

Pick up litter:

Litter is bad for the tree and the wildlife using the tree. Pick up litter in the tree pit and carefully remove any that got tangled in the branches.

Mulch:

If you are able to and allowed to, mulching tree pits is a great way to help the tree get the water it needs. Mulch helps filter **pollutants** out of water and let the water slowly trickle into the ground for the tree roots to take up. But make sure not to pile the mulch against the trunk of the tree! This may trap water and cause rot.

Curb your dogs:

Dogs and dog waste (liquid and solid) may harm trees. The waste can harm a tree's trunk and add to much of certain chemicals, like nitrogen, into the ground. Make sure pets don't go into tree pits.