

# EDITORIAL

Increased emphasis is being placed worldwide on the use of natural systems as the most effective and cost-efficient way of addressing many of the social, environmental and infrastructural ills of modern life. One such system is the 'urban forest', a collective term describing the entire tree and woodland resource within an urban area. The urban forest contributes immensely to the quality of urban life, as reflected by the monetary evaluation of various benefits arising from the resource, such as pollution control, energy conservation, environmental amelioration, recreation, increased economic investment and savings in public health care. The benefits are such that, in major centres throughout the world, the urban forest is no longer regarded simply as an aesthetic element of the urban landscape, but as a vital component of the urban infrastructure essential in maintaining a liveable and sustainable environment.

Although dealing with a resource dominated by non-woodland components such as street trees and trees on public greenspace, 'urban forestry' – a modern approach to the management of the urban forest – is more closely aligned to traditional forestry than perhaps immediately apparent. As implicit in the term, urban forestry simply adopts the principle of sustained yield, which underpins forestry as a rural landuse, and applies it to the management of the urban forest. It aims to achieve and maintain a balanced age structure within each urban locality, to ensure continuous tree cover and hence, the sustained 'production' of benefits for current and future generations. In effect, trees are managed, not as single isolated entities, but as part of an overall resource, based on their contribution or hindrance to the attainment of a balanced age structure within that resource. Achieving this requires long-term planning, secure resource allocation and detailed surveys, inventories and work programmes. It also requires the co-ordinated input, through agreed practices and strategies, of all those impacting directly and indirectly upon the resource, such as horticulturists, arboriculturists, foresters, landscape architects, planners, legislators, engineers, voluntary sector organisations, developers and utility managers, so as to avoid conflict and replication and to capitalise on all available expertise. Urban forestry is also a social discipline, as it actively encourages and facilitates the participation of urban communities in their local urban forest resource. This yields huge social benefits, not least of which is the empowerment of communities to contribute to their own environment. The net result of urban forestry is a move away from over-maturity and crisis management, towards a younger, healthier resource better equipped to fulfil its role as an essential component of the modern urban infrastructure.

Since the late 1980s, the forestry sector has played a huge part in establishing the concept of urban forestry on this island, and is continuing to actively encourage its adoption by local authorities. As foresters, members of the Society will always have a unique input to offer, not only in the development and management of urban woodlands, but also in providing the long-term planning perspective central to urban forestry. Such involvement will offer a unique opportunity for us to 'showcase', on the very doorstep of the urban dweller, the nature of rural forestry as a sustainable multi-benefit landuse, and to promote an understanding among this increasingly influential portion of Irish society of the necessity of seemingly destructive operations as part of an ongoing cycle of renewal and regrowth. It will also enable the professional forester to take full advantage of exciting new opportunities afforded by the growing application of urban forestry in Ireland, and in doing so, to make an important contribution towards the greening of our towns and cities.

Submissions to *Irish Forestry* are welcome and will be considered for publication.

The attention of contributors is drawn to "Guidelines for Submissions". Submissions to be addressed to:

The Editor,  
The Society of  
Irish Foresters,  
2 Lower  
Kilmacud Road,  
Stillorgan,  
Co. Dublin,  
Ireland.

*Editor*  
Kevin D. Collins

*Business Editor*  
Gerard Cahalane

*Editorial Committee*  
John Fennessy  
Eugene Hendrick  
Padraic Joyce  
Tom McDonald

ISSN 0021-1192  
Volume 54  
No. 2, 1997

Printed by:  
Elo Press Ltd.,  
Dublin 8, Ireland.

Disk conversion  
and page layout by:  
Diskon Technical  
Services Ltd.,  
Dublin 8, Ireland.