URBAN TREE HEALTH: A Practical and Precise Estimation Method

Review by Tchukki Andersen, BCMA, CTSP

Urban Tree Health: A Practical and Precise Estimation Method
By Jerry Bond, Urban Forest Analytics LLC
Published by Urban Forest Analytics LLC

The tree care industry currently has protocols in place to assess the structural stability and potential risk of trees, but until now there had not been an actual tree health assessment platform. Jerry Bond has utilized existing industry research and created this missing link with his field guide Urban Tree Health: A Practical and Precise Estimation Method.

This intermediate-level guidebook is very manageable and simple to understand. Color photos and step-by-step examples provide the tree assessor with all the tools needed to make specific, objective tree health estimations. Using the tools in chapter three, "Observation Details," the tree assessor is trained to record and interpret tree health and non-tree health factors.

Live crown ratio, crown class and vitality are among the observable inputs. The clear examples of how to measure live crown ratio are depicted with graphics and photos of real-world, less-than-perfect trees. This clever system uses combinations of tree characteristics to provide either a basic or in-depth assessment that can be repeated by other assessors. Bond's manual is put to best use out of the office and in the field for day-to-day tree evaluation. Follow the step-by-step input method in the sample charts to create your own data.

The practical and precise estimation method promoted in this book offers many advantages to accurate tree health assessment, such as:

- restricts the scope of work to the health of the biological tree and ignores structural concerns
- estimates long term health, focusing observations on effects rather than causes
- employs parameters optimized for urban trees
- involves limited time and personnel needs
- creates the possibility of fast and accurate data collection through the use of percentage classes
- renders explicit the interpretation of field observations

Bond conveys three essential arguments throughout the book: there is currently not a solid methodology for estimating tree health; tree health can be estimated by following well-defined parameters, and; consistent recording/reporting provides pertinent information to the end user.

Even though this handbook covers the basics for clear-cut tree health estimates without the common data-heavy requirements, become familiar with it in an office or classroom setting before your first use in the field. A short learning curve on the estimation method will greatly speed your beginning assessments.

This book does not in any way suggest a cookie-cutter approach to tree health assessment. It does, however, offer specific information, tools and recording procedures for tree health assessors to make clear, repeatable assessments. Urban Tree Health: A Practical and Precise Estimation Method is a welcomed addition to the market for anyone performing PHC assessments, consulting and level-3 tree inventories.

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Urban Tree Health: A Practical and Precise Estimation Method is available from TCIA via our online store at www.tcia.com, or by calling 1-800-733-2622.