

# New York City Street Tree Census 1995

## General Description from 1995 Census Materials

On Saturday, July 29, Parks Commissioner Henry J. Stern launched the 1995 Street Tree Census, a citizen participatory study of New York city's street trees. The census is the most comprehensive effort in Parks & Recreation's history to enumerate each and every tree along the 33,278 blocks in New York City. Equipped with maps, clipboards, tape measures, and tree identification keys, volunteers record trees by species, size, location, and condition on specially designed data collection forms. Over 700 volunteers have joined the census, which is both an ongoing scientific study and a massive public education campaign on the importance of urban trees.

## Instructions Given to Data Collectors

**WHAT IS A STREET TREE?** Count all trees growing within 15 feet from the street edge as street trees. If any part of the trunk falls inside this distance, count the tree. Street trees are usually located between the street curb and the sidewalk, but they may also grow (1) in medians, (2) farther than 15 feet from the street edge but in front of a park or playground fence, and (3) farther than 15 feet from the street edge but clearly planted in a row along the street. Trees that occur in dense stands and appear to be "wild" or "natural" growth should not be counted. Do not count shrubs, which are plants with many small stems close to the ground.

**BLOCK:** Record each city block in the spaces above each data table on the Street Tree Data Collection Sheet after the words "On Street, between, and". Use a separate data table for each block, and record all street trees physically located on that block. For blocks with many trees, use the longer data tables; for streets with few trees, use the shorter ones. If the block is treeless, record the block information in the spaces above the data table, and write "No Trees" in the table.

**ADDRESS:** Record trees by building addresses. Assume property lines are located halfway between buildings. Some trees will be in front of a building and easy to address; others will be on the side of a building that fronts another street. Always use a building's front street address for a tree, with further clarification regarding the tree's location indicated in the SITE column (explained below).

**SITE:** This column clarifies the position of trees not located in the fronts of buildings, and also indicates any unusual address locations. If the tree is in front of a building, leave the SITE column blank. Record as many of the following as apply for each tree under SITE:

"**Side**" for trees located on the side of a building (i.e. around the corner from the front);

"**Median**" for trees located in medians or center strips, traffic islands, squares, or sitting areas (use the building address across the street from the median trees);

"**Across**" if the closest building address is across the street from the tree;

"**Adjacent**" if the closest building is next door to (adjacent to) the tree's location.

**TREE NUMBER:** Number multiple trees at one address in the order of ascending addresses, beginning with number 1 at each address. If there is only one tree at an address, you do not need to number that tree. If there are trees in more than one site category per address, start with tree number 1 for each category.

**SIZE:** Using a measuring tape, record the circumference (to the nearest inch) of each tree at breast height (approx. 4.5 ft.) in the SIZE column. If a tree trunk has more than one main stem below breast height, mark a "**B**" (for "branched") under the SIZE column. If the tree is growing in a planting tub, indicate "**P**". Then measure the diameter at breast height of every stem of that tree and record this information in the same column.

**SPECIES:** Using the leaf key on the reverse side of this sheet, identify each tree and enter its code (found in parenthesis after tree name) under the SPECIES column. If you do not recognize a tree, enter a question mark. If you do recognize a tree, and it is not one of the species shown on the back, enter its name in the SPECIES column.

**CONDITION:** Decide which of the following condition categories best describes each tree, and record the letter representing each condition under the CONDITION (COND.) column.

**excellent (E):** full, well-balanced crown and limb structure; leaves normal size and color; no dead or broken branches; trunk solid; bark intact.

**good (G):** crown uneven or misshapen; some mechanical damage to bark or trunk; some signs of insects or disease; leaves somewhat below normal size and quantity; some dead or broken branches (less than half of the tree).

**poor (P):** large dead limbs with over one-half of the tree already dead or removed; large cavities; drastic deformities; leaves significantly below normal size and quantity; severe insect or disease damage.

**shaft (SH):** all branches removed; trunk left standing; sprouts may or may not be evident.

**stump (ST):** stump shorter than breast height; leaves entirely absent or present only on stump sprouts.

**dead (D):** dead tree; leaves absent; twigs brittle.

**none (N):** vacant sidewalk tree planting pit.

**SW (SIDEWALK):** check this box only if the tree's roots have raised the adjacent sidewalk.

**SUPPORT:** note "G" here only if the tree has an existing support structure such as a guy wire or iron cage. Note "R" (for "remove") if the support structure, or an attached light, is strangling the tree.

**Wires:** If the tree is located under utility wires, put a check (" ") in the UTILITY (UTIL.) column.

### Notes on This Data Release:

The 1995 Street Tree Census was collected using the address nearest to each tree, and not its spatial location. As a result, the location provided in the X/Y and Latitude / Longitude fields does *not* exactly identify the location of the tree as it existed in 1995. The coordinates provided give an approximate location of the address, and do not take into account factors in the data such as the 'Site' field, which indicates that a tree's actual location may differ from the address in specific ways, such as a tree that is across the street from a given address. Therefore, it is not appropriate to view this data as an exact map showing the location of city trees down to a specific planting site but data showing the relative distributions of trees across a geographical area such as a zip code.

To further facilitate the use of this data in comparing the urban forest of 1995 to current conditions we've added a number of fields using modern geocoding and modern geographic boundaries. The fields CB\_New, Zip\_New, CensusTract\_2010, CensusBlock\_2010, NTA\_2010, and SegmentID all refer to modern versions of these geographic entities. These allow, for example, a user to look at the number of trees in a given census tract from the 2010 census, which may be more relevant for certain types of analysis. Also, Community Board and Zip Code were replicated since these boundaries do sometimes change, so we re-geocoded the addresses to provide users with data that relates to 2015 zip codes and community boards. Note that gaps exist in these fields because not all addresses were successfully matched to a known location for a variety of reasons including spelling, formatting, and the use of alternate, colloquial, or honorific street names that aren't always recognized by Geosupport.