

TREE AND HUMAN SURVIVAL: A PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY FOR SURVIVAL

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ABSTRACT

Today we are put on notice by threats to our existence from failing to protect the tree systems we depend on, symptoms influenced by globalisation, evidenced by harmful species introductions and damaged soil ecosystems, resulting in tree declines and losses.

Half of humanity now lives in cities, and this increased drive affects both urban *and* rural living. To achieve resilience and sustainability we need a philosophical approach based on the foundations of our relationship with trees.

The pace of rapid change and the drive to modern living stand in the way of understanding the role played by tree-ed environments in mitigating flooding, soil loss, buffering temperature extremes and balancing other human induced impacts.

Conservation arboriculture takes an ecosystem approach. It draws on ethnobotany, and resonates with the dependant relationships our ancestors had with trees. The many cultural expressions of traditional tree management – what might be termed *vernacular arboriculture* scattered in our landscape – carry signs of a coevolved relationship, one built on ancestral traditions and knowledge that in the health and longevity of trees also holds the secret of soil and human health.

However, to regard arboriculture as a new discipline is to misunderstand something that has rumbled deep in our essential makeup. This story has local and global implications. Such practices have shaped agriculture, communities and human history and civilisations. Without a philosophy that acknowledges this interdependence and our cultural practices with trees, we are at risk.

Exploring fundamental natural relationships helps to make right decisions based on integrating our lives with trees to increase our prospects for a shared ecosystem and sustainable future. Some practical examples derived from this approach will be explored.