

What Is a Tree Inventory?

A tree inventory can be a powerful tool for anyone tasked with managing many trees. A tree inventory is a record of the location, size, species, and condition of trees being managed. With this data, a manager can make decisions about new plantings, maintenance, or removals that are based on factual information. Tree inventories:

1. **Highlight areas that need attention:** Using maps, managers can visualize areas with low biodiversity, urgent conditions, or poor coverage.
2. **Prevent bias:** Managers can focus on the data instead of “squeaky wheels”; it is likely that management is needed in under-reported areas.
3. **Facilitate planning:** Managers can take a bird’s eye view of conditions and form long-term plans that address specific vulnerabilities and risks in a sustainable way.
4. **Collate and communicate important statistics:** This data can be used when seeking funding, justifying actions, demonstrating progress, and to improve general community engagement and outreach (inventories are a fantastic educational tool!).

<u>Pieces of a tree inventory</u>
Latitude & Longitude
Species
DBH
Condition
<i>Wires</i>
<i>Planting space</i>
<i>Inventory Date</i>
<i>Prune date</i>
<i>Special designations</i>
<i>Anything else of interest!</i>

Tree inventories can include other types of information, such as the amount of space available for planting, the presence of utility wires, dates of various types of service (such as inventory measurement or pruning). Special designations can even be included such as an arbor day planting or a memorial tree. This type of information increases efficiency by guiding remote management of trees and tracking trends.

An inventory can be as simple as a record written on paper, although there are now more sophisticated tools to support groups interested in building an inventory (see the examples listed at the end of this resource). Inventories are most useful when continually updated. In most contexts, an inventory is generally considered “old” at about five years, and out-of-date at about ten years.

A **tree inventory system** is GIS software that is often accessible via an app or internet browser. The system displays tree inventory data on a map and allows for additions and edits. Many tree inventory

systems have features such as photo uploads and report building. Some feature ticket tracking, which allows managers to track the status of pruning, removals, stump grinding, and new plantings.

The most customizable tree inventory systems are subscription based, offered by companies which can send a certified arborist to collect an inventory of a designated management area and build a custom viewer for a manager's specific needs and workflow. There is significant value in pursuing this type of platform and professional service; trained tree inventory arborists are equipped with the expertise to identify urban trees, and hazardous conditions, and can supply a high-quality inventory which can be integrated immediately into management.

These professional services may be cost-prohibitive for some managers or management applications. Alternatively, some managers may have sufficient arboricultural experience to conduct their own inventory. Even a basic inventory built by volunteers can be a useful tool for planning and outreach. For these applications, there are low-cost and free software alternatives which may have less customizability or fewer features while still providing core tree inventory capabilities. It is also an option to only subscribe to proprietary software but not purchase inventory services.

The following list of tree inventory systems is not exhaustive and are provided as examples only. The DEEP Urban and Community Forestry Program makes no endorsement of any inventory software or inventory provider included on this list. Managers who are interested in obtaining inventory services are encouraged to seek multiple quotes and to inquire with local arboricultural service providers.

Examples of Tree Inventory Systems

[Arborpro Urban Forest Management](#)

[ArcGIS Tools for Tree Inventory Management](#)

[TreeKeeper Inventory Management Software](#)

[TreePlotter Software Suite](#)

Free Tree Inventory Tools

[i-Tree Streets \(legacy\)](#)

[Trees Count Mobile App](#)

[QGIS](#) & [QField](#) are an option for those with more advanced GIS skills.

See [Free Tree Inventory Options](#) for more discussion.