

Monkey Business: The Confluence of Arboriculture and Environmental Education

PHILIP BENNETT

In the field of urban forestry, Arborists spend considerable time thinking about and preparing for the future growth of young trees. We ask questions like: “Does the tree have adequate soil volume?”, “Does the site drain well?” “Is there enough space for the tree to grow to maturity?” This presentation proposes that we ask similar questions about the learning and growth of children and young adults, specifically in their relationship to the natural world.

Our current technologies, although useful, are increasingly separating young human beings from their natural environment. Many of the conditions that inspired us to become Arborists, (outdoor play, climbing trees etc.) are missing for young people. The presentation will challenge participants to ask questions such as: “How do we get young people in touch with nature?” and “How can we ensure that we will be replaced by an inspired younger generation of Arborists?”

The presentation will describe the obstacles to nature connection, and then suggest strategies for incorporating environmental education into Arbor Day and other components of urban forestry programs. Information will be presented from Richard Louv’s work on nature education as well as the eco-psychology of Bill Plotkin, David Abrams, Gary Paul Nabhan, Stephen Trimble and others.