Urban Forests:
History, Uses, and Meanings

Tania López Marrero

About the Urban Forests: History, Uses, and Meanings Project

The **Urban Forests: History, Uses, and Meanings project** (BUHUS, by its Spanish acronym) aims to understand and document the diverse meanings, histories, uses, and benefits of urban forests through the perceptions and perspectives of people living in urban environments. Recognizing and engaging with this diversity of viewpoints highlights the importance of urban forests and trees, supporting their management and conservation. In addition, the knowledge generated by the project provides a foundation for developing initiatives that foster greater public understanding and appreciation of these urban ecosystems.

Approximately 300 people participated in BUHUS, including students from the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez, as well as residents and visitors of the municipalities of Mayagüez and Añasco. Information was collected primarily through questionnaires and brief interviews, typically conducted at sites where urban trees are located, allowing participants to observe the trees and reflect on them. The project also included visual exercises using illustrations of different urban forest configurations, enabling participants to share their perspectives on them.

The project involved a team of 23 undergraduate students from a wide range of disciplines—including sociology, political science, psychology, comparative literature, art theory, biology, microbiology, geology, agro-environmental sciences, industrial engineering, and civil engineering—as collaborators. Their participation provided opportunities to engage with the study of urban forests and trees while contributing to the collaborative production of knowledge and the development of creative projects. In doing so, BUHUS helped foster the next generation of professionals working at the intersection of society and the environment.

Project publications

Fact sheets

Several fact sheets were produced. One introduces urban forests and their benefits, while the others are based on the project's data collection findings:

Example of a fact sheet

Urban forests and their benefits

This fact sheet presents several definitions of what constitutes an urban forest and describes the different types of urban forests according to their spatial configuration within the landscape. It also includes a list of the benefits that urban forests provide.

¿Beneficiosos o perjudiciales? Perspectivas sobre los árboles en entornos urbanos (available only in Spanish)

This fact sheet summarizes participants' understandings of what constitutes an urban forest and the benefits that trees provide in urban spaces, specifically in the Adolfo Pesante Public Plaza in Añasco and along the streets of downtown Mayagüez. It also presents their perspectives on the negative aspects associated with these trees.

¿Qué es un bosque urbano? Perspectivas de estudiantes universitarios sobre sus beneficios y aspectos negativos (available only in Spanish)

This fact sheet summarizes university students' understanding of what constitutes an urban forest and their opinions on different types of urban forests by spatial configuration. It also presents their perspectives on the benefits and negative aspects associated with both urban forests and the trees that comprise them.

¿Cuál es tu árbol favorito? Intereses y curiosidades de los árboles del Recinto Universitario de Mayagüez (available only in Spanish)

This fact sheet presents the trees that most captured the attention of a group of students at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez, as well as the characteristics they found most noteworthy, the questions and curiosities they expressed, and the information they were most interested in learning about these trees.

Books

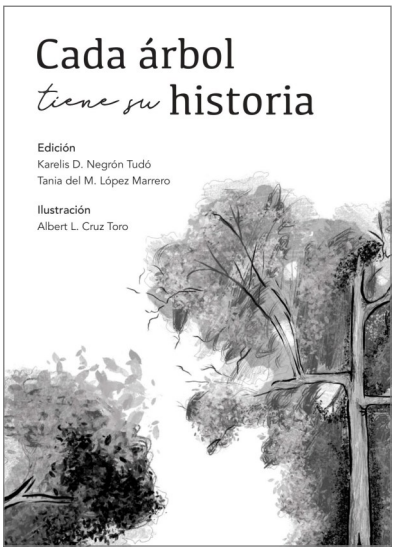
Two books were produced as part of the project: one explores the histories of trees in urban environments, and the other offers activities designed to encourage engagement with urban forests and trees while fostering curiosity about them :

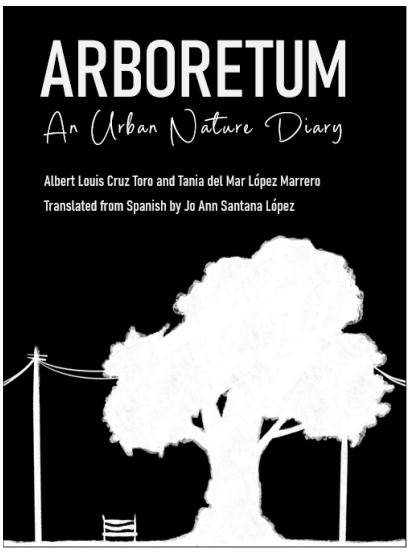
Cada árbol tiene su historia (available only in Spanish)

Through anecdotes, short stories, and poetry, 11 undergraduate students from the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez offer an imaginative, creative, and engaging perspective on trees in urban environments. Their writings highlight the vital role that trees play not only in ecological processes but also in the social and cultural fabric of Puerto Rico.

Arboretum: An urban nature journal

Through a variety of creative activities, this book invites readers to explore, observe, and reflect on trees in urban environments, promoting active, place-based learning and a deeper appreciation of urban nature.





Books covers of **Cada árbol tiene su historia** and **Arboretum: An urban journal nature**

Tree inventories

Tree inventories were conducted at two of the study sites: the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez campus and the José Adolfo Pesante Public Plaza in Añasco .

Learn more about the project

For more information about the project and to access its publications, click here or scan the QR code.

Acknowledgments

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For additional information

For additional information, please contact Tania López Marrero, Project Coordinator, at tania.lopez1@upr.edu.

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