

VEGETATION IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT (R2001*, R2007)



Policy Statement

The American Society of Landscape Architects believes that the appropriate use of vegetation in the built environment is a major influence on the quality of human life and in creating a healthy environment. Trees, shrubs, herbaceous, and aquatic plants filter pollutants in the air and water, mitigate wind and reduce solar heat gain, and stabilize soil to prevent or reduce erosion. These plants also create animal habitat, help filter and absorb stormwater runoff, and may help mitigate carbon emissions. Efficient use of plants can reduce energy needs. Plants provide an effective counterpoint to the built environment and create places of beauty. The cumulative effects of these attributes are essential to balancing the effects of humans on the land. Furthermore, the native plant communities of a region provide some of the strongest cues to the unique identity of a place and generally require less maintenance and irrigation. The collaboration of design and science is critical to the creation of a healthy growing environment.

Rationale

Our sense of place is influenced by many factors. As population increases and suburban and urban areas expand, vegetation should be integrated into the built environment, with attention given to appropriate species selection and to creating areas that are suitable to optimal plant growth and health.

The Society endorses the following:

1. Continued research on the ability of plants to help mitigate impacts of global climate change and reducing atmospheric concentrations of carbon emissions.
2. Emphasis on the importance of vegetation in the built environment and the beneficial effects of plants on the environment.
3. Development of federal, state, and local policies regarding the appropriate use of native, indigenous, noxious, and invasive species.
4. The development of systems and tools to ensure that all plant professionals are fully educated in the proper methods of plant selection, planting practices, and post construction maintenance.
5. Collaboration and information exchange between the various plant professionals, professional groups and the public to facilitate sound plant selection and planting practices.

* Replaces Urban Forestry Policy (1991, R2001) and Atmospheric Pollution Policy (R2000, R2001)