



Topic: Trees as Noise Barrier

Question: Our city is considering planting trees in the street right-of-way to help buffer the sound of traffic. But, we do not know if a tree or shrub buffer really does the job. Do you know of any studies we can review to see if trees or shrubs reduce street noise?

Jamie, e-mail

Answer: There are two recommended books on the topic. The first is “Urban Forestry: Planning and Managing Green Spaces” by Robert Miller. The second is by Cook and Van Haverbeke and is titled, “Trees and Shrubs for Noise abatement.” Both books pay ample attention to the subject. As it turns out there is little plant species effect. Much of the impact is probably perception, “out of sight out of mind.” However, what seems to work are very tall trees forming a continuous barrier of at least 100 feet. This structure is not practical on city streets. A wall is much more efficient as a sound attenuator but more often not as pretty as living trees.

Useful Links

[Small Trees Fact Sheet](#)

[Stephen's Webpage](#)

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