

A passion for soils

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As an arboriculturist, I've always understood that soils are crucial to the growth and anchorage of trees, but admittedly the subject hasn't really interested me that much. It's always been something I've considered to be one of the less glamorous aspects of the profession.

As a result of this petty prejudice, I have taken a deeper interest in other subjects and have sadly neglected to invest much time and energy into the study of soils – until April 2016 when I attended the course 'Introduction to soils' hosted by the Arb Association at Lantra House, Stoneleigh, near Warwick. The course leader, Andy Moffat, brought life to the subject matter with a relaxed demeanour, humour and a great depth of knowledge and passion.

This course provided a varied day of lectures and some outdoor experiments. We all enjoyed getting our hands dirty

in different soil types which Andy had kindly brought along for us to rub between our fingers and thumbs. This wasn't some kind of bizarre ritual or existential crisis: we were identifying soil types – some of us successfully (I'll get the hang of it).

The objectives precisely fitted my reasons for attending the course. Ahead of it I'd been worried we would be listening to somebody talking about soils all day, which I think is a fair expectation considering the course title. It turned out to be a perfectly judged discourse on soils and their relationship with trees, plants and the wider environment, drainage, plant nutrition, urban soils, shrinkable soils, remediation of soil problems, the use of structural soils and far more areas than I can list here.

It was very relevant to the professional arb, especially consultants and local authority

tree officers. It was pleasing to see an ecologist attending as well, who brought a different perspective to the debate. I think a lot of courses could benefit from the attendance of people from related disciplines. It is all too easy to talk shop with a room full of arbs, but you don't always learn a lot like that.

I learned a lot and I refreshed some of the knowledge I had hidden away somewhere in the back of my mind from nearly 10 years ago when I last studied for higher qualifications. If you want to get your head around soils but shudder at the memory of those interminably dull college lectures, don't worry: book yourself on this course. You will be pleased you did.



Introduction to soils

16/07/2016	Bristol
29/09/2016	Wokingham
16/11/2016	Preston

For more details and to book a place, visit trees.org.uk/Training-And-Events