## **BIOPHILIC CITIES JOURNAL / THE BOOKSHELF**

## The Architecture of Trees Review By Sean Geygan

Nearly four decades following its original publication in 1982, the new edition of "The Architecture of Trees" by Cesare Leonardi and Franca Stagi was released last year by Princeton Architectural Press. As a "scientific tome" of tree knowledge, it represents the authors' intent to express a deeper understanding of, and nurture a closure relationship with, our chlorophyllic friends.

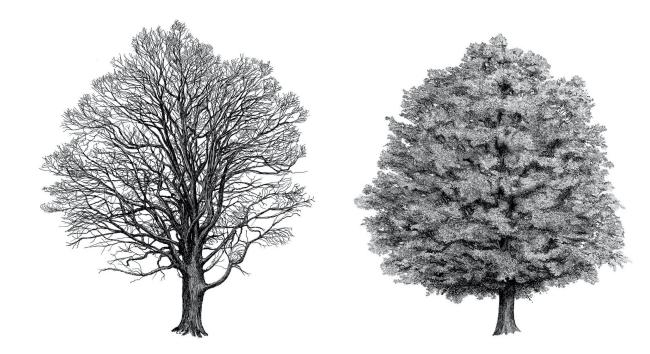
As architecturally trained students from Italy, Leonardi and Stagi recognized the inability to design parks without deep tree knowledge. That compelled Leonardi's diagrammatic explorations. His obsessive-to-detail quill-pen illustrations, depicted through 550 plates, span 212 species (and 24 varieties) are. These were all drawn at 1:100 scale and are presented at the same.

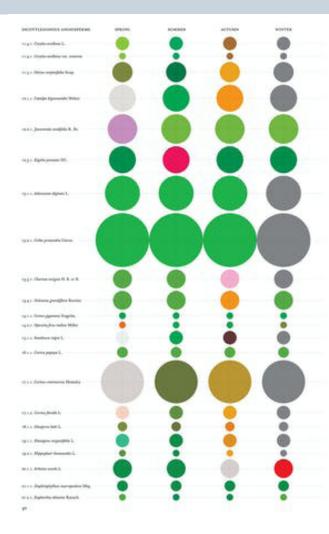
The rigorous act of drawing revealed minute but undeniable traits of trees. As was then still is now, the act of drawing trees "allows one to consider and incorporate the various features (the size and shape of the trunk, the branches, their density and



size, and the foliage) different examples of a tree might have, and second, it makes it possible to isolate a tree from its surroundings."

Stagi and Leonardi were impressed by trees for their architectural form. It inspired the duo's approach to park design: open space ought to be designed "not to the measure of man, but to the measure of trees."

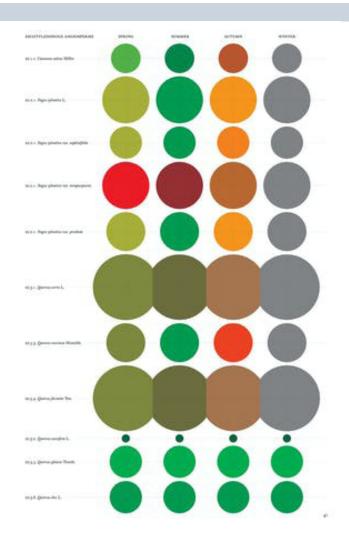




Further scientific analysis of trees include the authors' shade projections, presented in the reissue as refined CAD diagrams, and their study of foliage color over four seasons, which have been reconstructed in this edition to match the documents in the Stagi and Leonardi archives.

In their practice, shade analysis was elevated as a part of landscape design. They allowed the number, type, and position of tree plantings to be guided by where those trees would project their shadows onto the earth. Further still, the designers considered how sunlight penetrates a thick-leafed, mature tree differently than the bright green leaves of the same tree when young.

For Stagi and Leonardi, annual evolution of trees' foliage was a delightful reminder of the progress of life and a reflection of the human experience of place. Varying day-to-day and across changing



seasons with shifting leaf pigments, a tree's foliaged appearance reflects important distinctions among forms and places.

This compendium of aesthetically beautiful tree diagrams serve as a reminder to the complex, living experience of plants and our neighborly relationship to them that defines the distinct quality of any planted landscape.

rs Cesare Leonardi and Franca Stagi (2019). *The* d, *Architecture of Trees.* Princeton Architectural Press.