



Meet the Scientist!



As a research ecologist,
I study the ecology of trees
in cities, towns,
and suburbs.

Dr. Lara Roman Research Ecologist

Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley
USDA Forest Service scientist



<http://www.naturalinquirer.org>

Important Scientist Characteristics:

I enjoy building relationships with colleagues and partners outside of my research. These relationships are important to my interests because my studies require partnerships. I also obsess over making sure we get details right, which is important in all aspects of scientific research.

Example of a simple research question I have tried to answer:

What are the rates and leading causes of tree death in cities, particularly for trees recently planted in yards and along streets? How does tree cover in urban areas — the amount of space taken up by trees — change over decades?

Technology or equipment used in research:

The most basic tool for a forest ecologist is a diameter tape! This tool is a special measuring tape that you wrap around a tree's trunk. Instead of measuring circumference, the tape tells us the diameter. Essentially, the tape has already done the math for circumference. It is a very simple piece of equipment, but one that takes some practice. We often need to make corrections for common mistakes, and make sure field crews get consistent measurements.

Most Exciting Discovery

A program in Sacramento (CA) gives away free trees for residents to plant in their yards. The goal of the program is to shade homes, which saves energy from air conditioning in the summer. I tracked survival of these trees over 5 years. I found that if homeowners move, it hurts a tree's chances of survival.

When did you know you wanted to be a scientist?

When I learned about ecosystems in middle school science class, I was hooked. I volunteered at a science museum in Philadelphia, the Academy of Natural Sciences. That experience shaped my desire to do scientific research, especially ecology.

<http://www.nrs.fs.fed.us/people/lroman>