



“Save our parks”, as a representation of those in Madrid who are aware of the crucial role of green areas in people’s physical and mental health, and since it is a proven fact that the local authorities in our city defend other interests and won’t listen to us, requests the help of the European Commission.

These are our reasons:

The following extract is a piece of evidence of how our mayor and the rest of our current local government conceive the management of green areas:

*“During this last term in office (2019-2023), the City Council’s commitment to the recovery of the green areas has materialized in the completion of **85 public works** distributed in all of the districts, with a budget of 79,6 million euros...”*

This is the way they quantify the trees planted in public areas and their conservation:

“During this last term in office (2019-2023), 210.000 trees have been planted, 185.000 of them in the city itself and the other 25.000 in the biggest green infrastructure we are creating around Madrid: the Metropolitan Wood which will surround it”

The display of these figures, full of triumphalism, shows the local government is out of touch with the reality we citizens of Madrid are actually living and even with the official data, which are quite different

The standardised design of the public interventions that have taken place and are currently taking place in the green zones and parks in Madrid shows that the Council’s politics are focused on construction, not on taking care of plants and trees or on landscape gardening. That’s a fact that can be verified by looking at the way they distribute the budget into the different line items.

In several of the cases that have been analysed (Parque de Aluche, El Calero, Parque de Las Cruces, La Cornisa), a high percentage of the investment goes to “pavement” and this pavement is done with inert materials such as aggregate, cobble stones and a mixture of sand, hydrated lime and granite powder. Incredible as it seems, these materials are not used to pave the paths, but to cover most or all of parks’ terraces, which causes a terrible impact on the soil’s life, makes it really hard for the trees to survive and contributes to the increase of temperatures, as a popular initiative that took place in the region of Madrid last July, called “**La Termometrada**”, has, not surprisingly, come to prove. Parks do not look like real parks anymore, so the wellness, pleasure and mental health that they used to provide has dramatically diminished.

Furthermore, the constructors that perform these interventions are prone to handling the existing trees, their roots and their pits with no care at all. We have evidence that, as a result of their work, many trees have dried up or have been seriously harmed and, consequently, will probably be felled soon. As these interventions were taking place, a large number of empty pits where there used to be trees have been covered with cement or cobblestones, leaving little or no hope that there will ever be a tree there again.

It all makes sense when we see that this series of public works has been preceded by a “Comprehensive contract for the cleaning and maintenance of green zones service” (“Contrato integral de gestión del servicio de limpieza y conservación de zonas verdes”) which implies that our parks and their management are now completely in the hands of private companies. These



companies have reduced the staff (they have the perfect excuse: these materials that now cover our parks's soils do not need to be gardened)

The consequence of this contract is quite visible: parks have been totally or partially abandoned, since the companies that "take care" of them limit themselves to indiscriminately weeding the areas where there is still fertile soil and moving some litter and dry leaves around with street sweeper blowers which cause disproportionate noise and air pollution.

In addition, many of these parks, especially those in the most modest districts (Latina, Carabanchel, Usera) are never properly clean, but full of (hundreds or even thousands of) butts and all types of litter and scattered pieces of rubbish that are never removed. It may take more than two weeks for these companies to empty some of the bins and pick up even the most visible rubbish from the soil. Neighbours have repeatedly made formal complaints, with no results.

If we look at the real figures that the city council offers as regards the trees planted in public areas, there are no reasons for optimism:

- **Mature trees:** Between 2019 and 2022, their number has been reduced from 400.739 to 322.123, according to the local council statistics in Planted trees in parks and green areas in Madrid There has been a net **loss of 78.616 trees.**
- **Recently planted trees** or trees that have not consolidated: This figure has risen from 42.987 to 61.397 in the same period.
- **Young trees:** There were 224.658 in 2019 and they totaled 290.315 in 2022.

However, ecologist associations have estimated that, when the heat starts, between 70 and 90 percent of the latter categories die. The reason is very simple: the city council does not water or take care of these new trees.

As to the **tree pits**, 4.162 all over the city will have been eliminated between the start of 2022 and the end of 2023.

We mustn't forget that, not only do trees and parks play a part in everybody's physical and mental health, but also they can even save lives in the prospect of temperaturas becoming higher and higher in the coming years.

In addition to all this and regardless of the citizens' needs, the city council is building more and more "cantones" (premises meant to keep cleaning machinery and vehicles)- **namely, 16-** inside green areas, plots of land used by neighbours for recreational purposes or in places very close to their houses, which is deteriorating the environmental conditions in the chosen spots, due to the noise and waste that these infrastructures cause. During the last pre-election campaign, in June 2023, 12 of these projects were stopped but, since the results were known, the council has resumed the works without informing the people affected.

In response to these careless-in the best of cases-policies, several groups in different neighbourhoods have united with the name “**Save our parks**” to support local actions and lead other coordinated actions in order to show the public our concern and fight for a livable and green city. Namely, we have two main goals: on the one hand, to become stronger as a movement; on the other hand, to have an influence on future decisions that will affect the parks and green areas in our city.

These are our requests:

- For the local authorities **to stop** all the unjustifiable **felling of trees** and for them to take care of the young trees.
- For the local authorities **to remove all the artificial materials**- aggregate, ground or pavement- that destroy all possibility of life coming from the soil again and can harm people’s health and for them to restore the natural state of the parks.
- For the local authorities **to respect and promote the recreational and close-to-nature essence of our parks**, to dismiss the private companies that are not cleaning the parks properly and to contract more staff in order to take care of these green areas.
- For the local authorities to be transparent **in the planning and execution of their projects, listen to local associations and people** that live in the different neighbourhoods instead of planning from an office and **let citizens have a say**, take part in the way their green areas are managed and supervise the interventions.

*More detailed information with photographic study:



<http://mesadelarbolcarabanchel.com/2023/09/18/saveourparks-salvemosnuestrosparques/>



#SALVEMOSNUESTROSPARQUES PLATFORM FOUNDERS & SUPPORT ENTITIES

Founding associations:

- #Yodefiendoestearbol
- Acción Delicias Palos de la Frontera
- AVA Aluche
- Mesa del Árbol de Carabanchel
- Parque Sinfonía – No al cantón
- Salvemos el Parque de La Vid
- Plataforma vecinal Salvemos El Calero
- Salvemos la Arboleda
- Salvemos la Casa de Campo
- Salvemos Montegancedo
- Vecinas Corniseras

Supporting associations:

- ALBA
- AMPA CEIP Carlos V
- Arriba las Ramas
- Asociación Cultural "El Sol de la Conce"
- Asociación para la Recuperación del Bosque Autóctono (ARBA)
- Asociación de Mujeres de Carabanchel Alto
- AV Defensa Medio Ambiente y contra túnel Pº Habana-Padre Damián
- ASPAFADES
- AAVV Quintana
- AAVV Barrio de Cuatro Vientos
- AAVV Parque Eugenia de Montijo
- AAVV Pasillo Verde Imperial
- CaniBlas Ambiental
- Casa Cultura y Encuentro de Carabanchel
- CEPA Vista Alegre
- Chamberí, Parque sí
- Ecologistas en Acción Madrid
- Ecologistas en Acción Getafe
- Entorno Meaques Retamares
- Esta es Una Plaza
- FRAVM
- Mesa del Árbol de Getafe
- Plataforma Por el Derecho a la Ciudad
- Red de Huertos Urbanos
- Salvemos Los Carriles
- TREPA Madrid
- VeGETAccion