Free Tree Inventory Options

The most important determinant of a quality tree inventory is people. Your surveyor(s) should have experience and a knowledge base appropriate for the needs of your organization or property. The ability to collect and export quality data is also very important. There are great commercial software options for collecting and managing inventory data, and these are recommended, especially for large numbers of trees, complex organizations, or public trees. But for simple, small or casual inventories, a free data collection tool may be satisfactory. Some of these are listed below.

Smart Device Applications

Mapping or Tree Inventory Applications
Some mapping applications allow you to drop points right on a map, though most do not permit much other data to be collected (e.g., tree species, diameter, land use). However, the below allow other attributes to be incorporated.
- [TreePlotter Lite](#) – a browser-based application that is a free version of the TreePlotter tool. Data will not be stored on the system but should be exported as a csv file (spreadsheet) and stored locally. This can be used "out-of-the-box".
- [Trees Count](#) – a separate application that can also be used "out-of-the-box". Data is exported as csv files to an email address.
- [Google My Maps](#) – the popular Google Maps application cannot be used for data collection, but My Maps can be accessed via a browser. The inventory structure can be designed on a computer.
- [QField](#) – a powerful, but complicated field mapping application connected to the popular open-source [QGIS](#) platform. This option requires GIS skills.

Citizen Science Applications
Some applications designed for citizen science projects can be customized for tree inventories. These are applications that can be set-up as a series of questions that you answer one-by-one. For example, you identify the tree species, then you identify the tree diameter, and onward.
- [Anecdata](#) – a form-building application in which you build your tree attributes into a form on a desktop computer, then data collectors can access your form on a smart device and add to it. Geolocation is available as an attribute. Data can be downloaded as a csv file.
- [EpiCollect5](#) – another form-building application in which you build your tree attributes into a form on a desktop computer, then data collectors can access your form on a smart device and add to it. Geolocation is available as an attribute. Data can be downloaded as a csv file.
- [iNaturalist](#) – a popular application for tracking biodiversity, this tool could be configured for a simple inventory and data downloaded as a csv file.

Paper and Pen
Though digital tree inventory methods are great for efficiency and data management, using a paper and pen might be a fine option, depending on the audience and number of trees. For those inventories, it is good to still identify the location. Coordinates can be derived from a smart device (e.g., through Google Maps) or tree locations marked on a paper map. Ultimately, it is encouraged to digitize your inventory by entering your data into a spreadsheet or other management tool.