Street Tree Planting & Establishment Guidelines

Before planting a tree on a city right-of-way (a street tree), you need to obtain a permit from City Nature Urban Forestry. The permit is FREE and includes an on-site inspection. An Urban Forestry Tree Inspector will assure the proper tree location and help you select appropriate tree varieties. This will ensure that the tree provides maximum benefits and requires minimal maintenance in the future.

Contact Urban Forestry prior to purchasing your tree!

The street tree planting permit will insure you plant the right tree in the right place.

Portland Parks & Recreation
City Nature Urban Forestry
10910 N Denver Avenue
Portland, OR 97217
ph: 503-823-4489
fax: 503-823-4493

Street tree planting, pruning and removal permits, general street tree information, tree cutting ordinances, park tree care and emergency tree response.

Additional Tree Resources

Bureau of Development Services 503-823-7526
Trees on private property that are being, or could be developed.

Bureau of Maintenance 503-823-1700
Sidewalk repair 503-823-1711
Blocked traffic/street signs 503-823-5211

Call Before You Dig 503-246-6699
Location of underground utilities.

Portland General Electric 503-736-5460

PacifiCorps 888-221-7070
Trees and power lines

Friends of Trees 503-282-8846
Community and natural area tree planting programs.

Portland Code Enforcement -- Nuisances
503-823-7306
Vegetation encroaching sidewalks, public right of ways, or driveways; visibility concerns at places other than intersections.

Traffic Safety Neighborhood Livability Hot Line
503-823-7233
Visibility concerns at intersections and traffic signs.

PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION
Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland

Commissioner Dan Saltzman
Director Zari Santner
www.portlandparks.org

Street Tree Planting and Establishment Guidelines

- **Permit Process**
- **How to Select a Healthy Tree**
- **Street Tree Planting Location**
- **Proper Planting and Establishment Care**

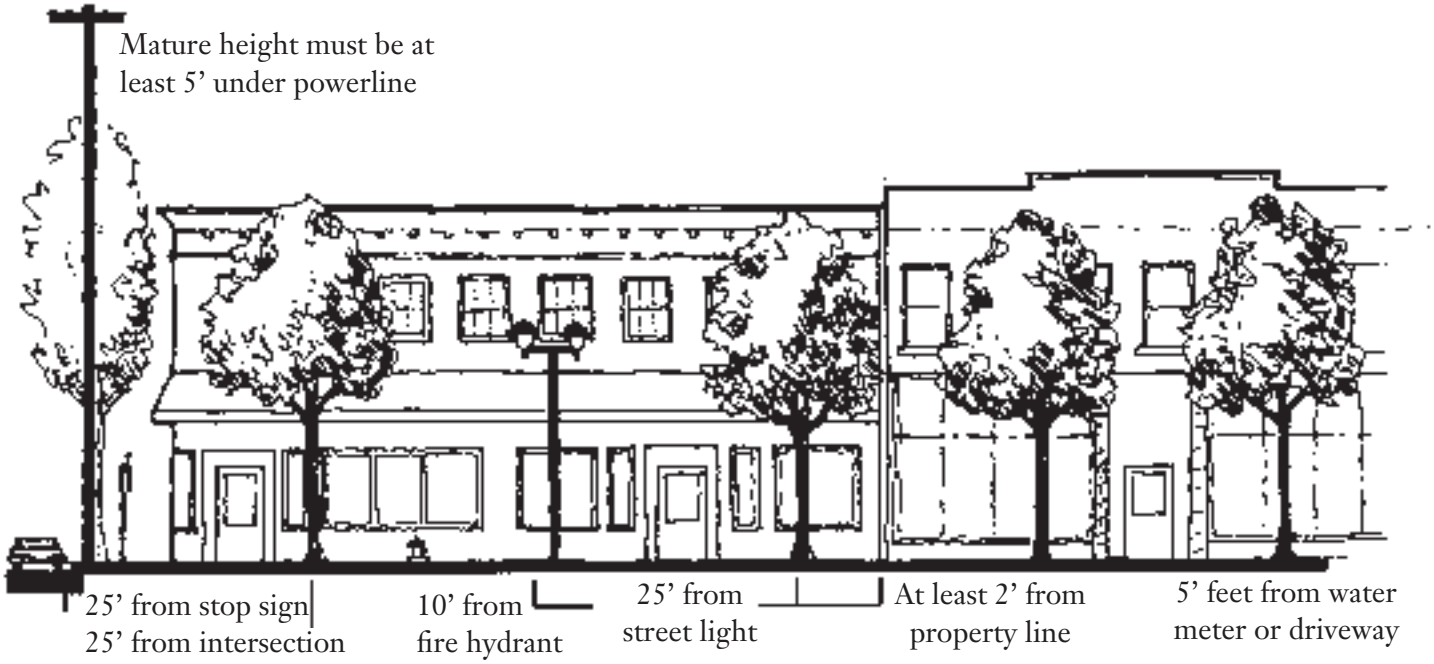
PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION
Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland

Tree Location Guidelines

The City Arborist will use the following guidelines when locating the planting site for your tree. Depending on the species of tree selected and/or special site conditions, these measurements may be altered by the arborist. For a list of trees that are suitable for your planting strip, contact City Nature Urban Forestry for a planting permit.

Trees shall not be planted closer than:

- 25' from the curb line of an intersection.
- 5' from alley margins and driveways.
- 10' from fire hydrants, underground utilities, and utility poles.
- 10' from directional traffic signs.
- 2' from property lines.
- 25' from stop or yield signs.
- 25' from street lights. If a narrower-growing species of tree is selected, the distance may be reduced to 15'.
- 20' or more from adjacent trees. This is determined by the species of tree selected and the species of adjacent trees.



Tree Wells - The standard tree well is 5' by 5'. When altering a sidewalk, you must obtain a permit from the Sidewalk Department by calling 503-823-1711. Tree grates and other materials may be required.

Unimproved Right-of-Way - Planting, pruning, and removal permits are required for work on *all* City-owned trees, including those growing on unimproved rights-of-way. In areas where there are no sidewalks and/or curbs, the City Arborist will consider existing trees, right-of-way width, parking areas, and foreseeable street improvements when issuing a planting permit.

Tree Spacing - Tree spacing is determined by the mature canopy spread of the species selected. The minimum spacing permitted is 20'. If a narrower-growing species of tree is selected, however, the distance may be reduced to 15'.

Tree Selection Guidelines

Your City Nature Tree Inspector will provide a list of approved trees for you to choose from. If you want a tree that is not on this list, ask the arborist if the desired tree is appropriate for the location. The following guidelines are used when selecting an appropriate tree.

Powerlines: The mature height of the tree must stay 5' below power lines. Do not confuse communication lines for powerlines. The presence of powerlines will be marked on the permit.

Building Setback: The crown of a tree at maturity should not be in serious conflict with the neighboring structures.

Clearance over streets and sidewalks: As trees grow, they will need pruning to provide clearance of a least 7 1/2 feet over sidewalks, 11 feet over residential streets, and 14 feet over main arterial streets.

Size of Tree When Planted: Standard tree size is 2" caliper or larger for single-family residential and 3.5" caliper or larger for non-residential sites and sites prone to vandalism.

When selecting a healthy tree, look for these characteristics:

- Strong, well-developed leader with good trunk taper
- Bright, healthy bark
- Healthy buds
- Trunk & limbs free of insect or mechanical injury
- Branches well distributed around trunk and of considerably smaller caliper than trunk.
- Ideal spacing between branches of at least 8-12" for most species
- Wide-angle crotches for strength
- Low branches are good for aiding taper development and promoting trunk caliper growth. Low branches should be removed from street trees, however, to meet clearance requirements.
- If bareroot: abundant root growth, with numerous fibrous roots.
- If balled & burlapped: firm soil with trunk securely tied. Do not accept a tree with a broken ball.

From Tree City USA Bulletin #1

Establishment Care

Proper establishment care is essential to a tree's long-term health and survival.

Newly planted trees must be watered regularly for the first two to three years. During the summer dry season (roughly June to October), we recommend deep-root watering to a depth of 30". Begin with 15 gallons of water per tree per week, and adjust as needed. During the remaining months of the year, monitor the root zone for dryness and watered as needed.

Trees should not require fertilizer, but if a tree appears unhealthy, check with an arborist to determine if fertilizer or some other care is needed. Trees should be monitored for insect and disease problems.

After two or three years, the tree should be pruned to remove poorly connected branches and to train the tree for street and sidewalk clearances. Contact City Nature Urban Forestry for information on proper pruning.

Maintain a mulch circle around the trunk of the tree. Mulch helps retain soil moisture and adds nutrients to the soil. Having mulch around the tree will also help prevent damage to the bark from lawn mowers and string trimmers. Do not pile mulch up around the trunk of the tree, however. This creates a environment which can lead to trunk decay.

Depending on the size and condition of the planting area and the vigor of the trees, root pruning may be advisable. Contact City Nature Urban Forestry for further information and a root pruning permit.

Method of Planting

The following recommendations are methods that will increase the tree's chances of survival and maximize its future health.

To check for underground utilities, call 503-246-6699 before you dig.

In most cases, the planting hole should be backfilled with the soil which was removed. Amendments should not be used unless the soil is very poorly drained or heavily urbanized. Consult your nursery specialist for information on how to amend soil. If soil amendments are needed, the planting hole should be dug three times wider than the width of the root ball.

If no soil amendments are used, a smaller hole may be dug (~1 ½ times the size of the root ball). However, a larger diameter planting hole promotes better tree health by aerating a larger amount of soil in the root zone. The depth of the hole should not be deeper than the depth of the root ball. Planting a tree too deep is a significant cause of tree failure in the urban area.

Lift the tree into the planting hole by the root ball, not the trunk. If the tree is in a container, gently remove the container prior to lifting the tree into the planting hole.

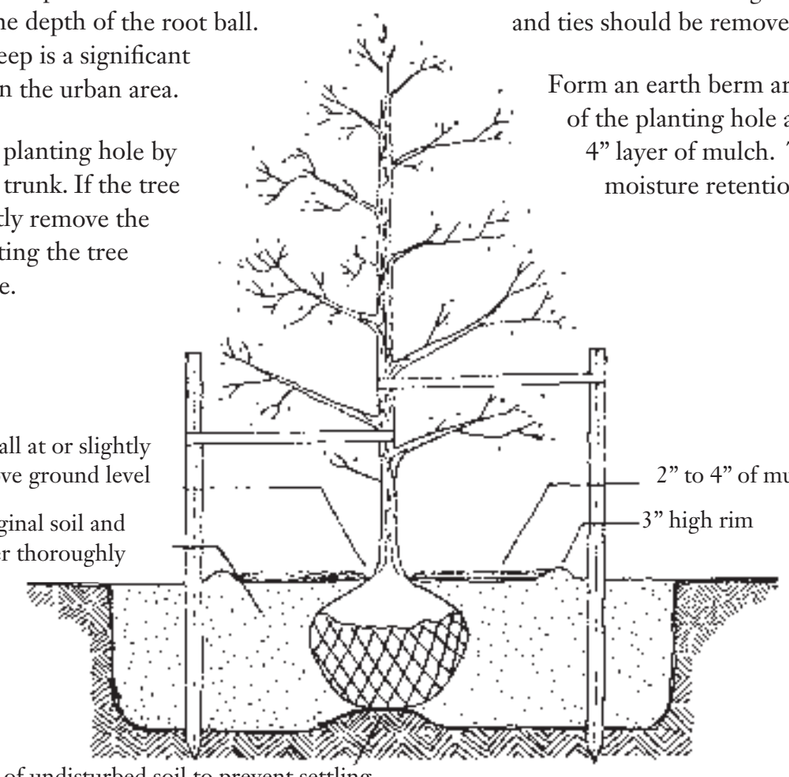
If the roots are circling the inside of the container, gently but aggressively break up only the offending roots to encourage normal growth and prevent tree girdling. Circling or girdling roots can prevent or inhibit establishment and may lead to premature tree death.

If the tree is balled and burlaped (B&B), remove as much wire, string, burlap, and plastic as possible. Be careful not to fracture the root ball.

Make sure the tree is straight and begin backfilling. Break up dirt balls and water as you fill. Gently tamp the soil, but do not compact the soil too much! The soil needs a good combination of air and dirt.

If the tree seems unstable, stakes may be used. Use wide, belt-like strapping attached to two sturdy stakes. Tie the tree loosely, taking care not to injure the bark. The tree should be able to sway in the wind to establish a strong root system. Stakes and ties should be removed after one year.

Form an earth berm around the edge of the planting hole and add a 2" to 4" layer of mulch. This will aid in moisture retention.



Leave a firm pedestal of undisturbed soil to prevent settling.