

Code Compliance

— guidelines on Seattle regulations governing safety and quality of life

Weed and Vegetation Enforcement

Updated June 5, 2014

A Property Owner's Responsibility

Streets and sidewalks are for everyone's use. As a property owner, you may not be aware that you are responsible for maintaining part of the public right-of-way next to your property—including the sidewalk and planting strip, alleys, walkways and roadways.

Weeds, Overgrowth, and Obstructions

The Weeds and Vegetation Ordinance enforced by the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (Seattle DCI) applies to vegetation that grows on private property and encroaches onto the public right-of-way, such as the sidewalk, street or alley, as well as vegetation growing immediately adjacent to private property such as the planting strip. To protect the health and safety of the public, it is important to keep streets, alleys and sidewalks free of obstructions, plant debris and other material.

You must trim or remove vegetation growing on your private property if it overhangs and obstructs streets, alleys or sidewalks, or if it is a fire hazard. A clearance of 8 feet over sidewalks and 14 feet over traveled roadways is required.

In most cases, the adjacent property owner must trim vegetation that interferes with the view of an intersection from 30 feet away. Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) codes trees may not obstruct streetlights, traffic signs or signals, or views of streets or intersections. See SDOT's list of recommended ground covers that are low growing and will not interfere with traffic visibility at www.seattle.gov/transportation/docs/2006TCPlantlist.pdf.

If trees are located in a public right-of-way, you need a permit from SDOT Urban Forestry to prune or remove them. If the trees are located on private property, you

may need to get Seattle DCI approval to remove the tree. You also need a Seattle DCI permit to remove vegetation in some environmentally critical areas such as a steep slope. See more information on these requirements at www.seattle.gov/dpd/permits/permit-types/treevegetationremoval/default.htm.

For more information on private property owner responsibilities in the public right-of-way, visit www.seattle.gov/transportation/publiccrow.htm.

Remember:

- The adjacent property owner is responsible for vegetation that grows onto sidewalks or roadways.
- Complaints regarding health concerns and vegetation that attracts rodents should be referred to the Seattle-King County Public Health Department.
- Vegetation overgrowth between private properties that does not encroach on the public right-of-way is a civil matter and should be resolved by the property owners.
- If the land in question is owned by the Seattle Parks Department (Parks), you must contact Parks regarding the problem. In such cases, Parks may remove or trim trees that put adjacent properties at risk.
- Complaints regarding vegetation interfering with power lines should be referred to Seattle City Light.
- Vegetation that constitutes a fire hazard should be referred to the Seattle Fire Department.
- Seattle Fire Department requires a 2-foot clear zone around fire hydrants.
- SDOT maintains most vegetation on public property if the vegetation is not adjacent to or originating from private property.



Reporting a Weeds and Vegetation Violation

To report a potential code violation use the phone numbers listed below. When you call to report a violation, please give the exact address of the property where you believe there is a code violation.

If you cannot give an accurate address, describe the location in as much detail as possible. Without an accurate address, the case may either be delayed or closed for failure to locate a violation.

Weeds and Vegetation – Public and Private Property

Vegetation encroaching onto the public right-of-way from private property.

Seattle DCI – Code Compliance Division

(206) 615-0808

www.seattle.gov/dpd/codesrules/

Vegetation on Public Property

Seattle Department of Transportation – Street Maintenance Division

North of Denny Way: (206) 684-7508

South of Denny Way: (206) 386-1218

www.seattle.gov/transportation/streetmaintenance.htm

Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation – Horticulture Program

(206) 684-4113

www.seattle.gov/parks/horticulture/treemaintenance.htm

Vegetation Management

Seattle City Light

(206) 386-1650

www.seattle.gov/light/neighborhoods/nh4_trtr.htm

Fire Prevention (including dry vegetation)

Seattle Fire Marshall

(206) 386-1450

www.seattle.gov/fire

Noxious Weed Information

King County Noxious Weeds Control Program

(206) 296-0290

www.kingcounty.gov/environment/animalsAnd-Plants/noxious-weeds/program-information.aspx

Rodent Harborage and Health Concerns

Seattle-King County Health Department

Pest Control

(206) 205-4394

www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/ehs/animals.aspx

Obtaining a Street Use Permit

Pruning or removal of trees growing in public right-of-way areas requires a street use permit.

City Arborist

(206) 684-TREE (8733)

www.seattle.gov/transportation/forestry.htm

Seattle DCI Permits

You are usually required to obtain our approval before cutting trees on private property. You may also need approval or special review to remove vegetation in environmentally critical areas, including steep slopes and areas near streams or other waterways.

Applicant Services Center

(206) 684-8850

www.seattle.gov/dpd/permits/permittypes/treevegetationremoval/default.htm

Access to Information

Links to electronic versions of Seattle DCI **Tips**, **Director's Rules**, and **Forms** are available on the "Tools & Resources" page of our website at www.seattle.gov/sdci. Paper copies of these documents are available from our Public Resource Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave. in downtown Seattle, (206) 684-8467.