



We're pleased to offer periodic tips on complying with Seattle's many codes, courtesy of DPD's Code Compliance staff, whose daily work fosters safety and quality of life.

Code Compliance staff enforce regulations that govern construction, land use, environmental protection, housing and building maintenance, just cause eviction, tenant relocation due to development activity, vacant buildings standards, vegetation overgrowth, and noise from construction and equipment.

For more information or to report a potential code violation, call (206) 615-0808 or visit the Code Compliance website at www.seattle.gov/dpd/Compliance.

Whose Responsibility is That Overgrown Bush?

—Property owners are responsible for vegetation that grows into the right-of-way from their property.

The warm days following this year's long, wet spring have been a tonic for trees and shrubs, and your thoughts may be turning to pruning. Well-maintained trees and plants increase property values and enhance our neighborhoods and our natural environment.

Seattle's gardens and trees are beautiful, but sometimes their exuberance means overgrowth into the adjacent sidewalk, street or alley. When property is developed, owners dedicate part of the land as "public right-of-way" for streets, sidewalks, utilities and similar public uses. Many property owners are unaware that they are responsible for maintaining the planting strip or road shoulder that borders their property, in addition to the plants on their own property.

When you think about pruning, in addition to aesthetics and the health of the plants, think about whether low-growing vegetation may trip someone or force pedestrians off a sidewalk and into the street. Low-hanging tree limbs may bump someone's head or scratch the roof of someone's vehicle. Seattle law requires that vegetation, including bushes, trees, garden plants and weeds, be maintained to provide at least eight feet of clearance above a sidewalk and 14 feet above a roadway or alley. Safety at street intersections for both pedestrians and vehicle drivers also is a concern when foliage and vegetation block the view of an intersection or an important street sign. In most cases, vegetation that interferes with the view of an intersection from a distance of 30 feet needs to be trimmed. Failure to trim overgrown vegetation may result in a citation with a fine of \$150 for a first offense and \$500 for subsequent offenses.

Please note that pruning and removal of trees from planting strips requires permits obtained through the Seattle Department of Transportation's Urban Forestry program. Permit applications may be found at www.seattle.gov/transportation/treepruning.htm or by calling (206) 684-TREE (8733). If your property is in an environmentally critical area, such as a wetland or a steep slope, special rules apply to tree pruning and vegetation maintenance, and a permit is required. See the information on DPD's website at www.seattle.gov/dpd/Codes/Tree_Landscaping_Regulations/Overview/default.asp and in DPD Client Assistance Memo 242, *Tree Protection Regulations in Seattle*, for guidance.



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