

Seattle Permits

— part of a multi-departmental City of Seattle series on getting a permit

Street Tree Planting Procedures

Revised 3/23/2010

The City of Seattle encourages the planting of trees along public streets. A property owner may plant a tree in a planting strip if he or she first obtains a permit from the City Arborist's Office.

There is no charge for the permit, but the City Arborist must approve the type of tree and the planting location. After you receive the permit to plant, you will be responsible for properly planting and maintaining the tree in perpetuity. This includes watering during the drier seasons, mulching and pruning.

Besides selecting a tree for aesthetics, please consider the following before you plant:

- In most cases, the Arborist only approves the planting of trees when there is a curbed roadway and a minimum five foot wide planting strip. (Five and a half feet as measured from the face of the curb.)
- See the Seattle Tree List for small upright or columnar, medium or large-scale trees as approved by the City Arborist. Trees other than those on the list will be considered after consultation with and approval by the City Arborist.
- Chose only small scale trees for planting under power lines. The City Arborist recommends the use of larger scale trees in areas that do not have overhead utilities present, as the environmental benefits of large scale trees greatly exceed the benefits of small varieties.
- Plant all small scale trees between 20 and 25 feet apart as measured from the center of the tree. Plant all upright or columnar trees between 15 and 25 feet apart. Plant all medium scale trees between 25 and 35 feet apart.
- Trees must be planted to the following standards:
 - 3½ feet back from the face of the curb.
 - 5 feet from underground utility lines.
 - 10 feet from power poles (15 feet recommended)
 - 7½ feet from driveways (10 feet recommended)
 - 20 feet from street lights or other existing trees.
 - 30 feet from street intersections.

PROHIBITED STREET TREES FOR SEATTLE

City Ordinance No. 90047 names the following trees as prohibited:

- Acer macrophyllum (Bigleaf maple, Oregon maple).
- Populus trichocarpa, P. deltoides (Cottonwoods).
- Populus nigra (Lombardy poplar).

These species have aggressive roots. The wood of some species is brittle and breaks up in wind. An expanded list of prohibited trees and trees approved with special consideration is available on SDOT's web site:

<http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/treeswithreservations.htm>

MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITY

In accordance with City Ordinance #90047 Title 15 Street Use Code, it is the responsibility of the property owner to maintain the tree(s). Please contact the City Arborist's office for more information.

Before You Plant, Know What is Already in the Ground

Call **811** to request the location of all underground utilities. **They** will mark your planting strip for the location of your water, electric and gas lines. You will need to do this before asking the City Arborist for an inspection.

Call the City Arborist to request an inspection of the proposed planting location. The arborist may need to coordinate with Seattle Public Utilities if the proposed location is near water, storm or sewer mains. Issuance of the permit before the tree planting is required. Please fill out the [Urban Forestry Application](#) and return to the City Arborist.

For more information, contact the City Arborist:

Seattle Department of Transportation
Seattle Municipal Tower, suite 2300
700 Fifth Avenue
PO Box 34996
Seattle WA 98124-4996
206 684 TREE (8733)

www.seattle.gov/transportation

