

# Planting and caring for your trees

## Seattle is better because of trees and you can help

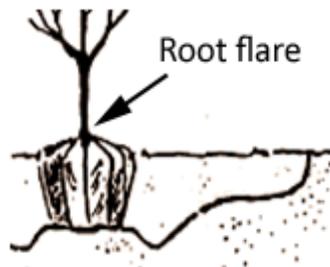
Each tree you plant and care for makes your neighborhood healthier and more livable. Right now, Seattle has 23 percent tree cover and we are working to increase it to 30 percent.

### Plant and care for a new tree

**Right tree, right place:** Think about how large the tree will grow and if your yard has the right sunlight, space and soil conditions when selecting a tree species.

#### Planting for success:

Dig the hole 2-3 times wider than the root ball and make sure the “root flare” is at least 1 inch higher than the finished soil height. Add 1 inch of mulch around the base of the tree, but do not let the mulch touch the trunk. Mulch against the trunk will lead to decay.



#### Help your tree grow strong:

The first three years are very important for your young tree. Follow these steps to be sure your tree stays healthy and to reduce future costs and problems.

- Newly planted trees need water in the summer. Water should always be applied slowly. Once or twice a week, use a garden hose set to a slow trickle for 30 minutes. To test proper watering, dig into the dirt 2 inches below the surface. This soil should be damp, but not wet.
- Prune young trees to create a strong structure and to remove dead, damaged, diseased, crossing, and rubbing branches. This will make your tree safer and healthier when it is older. Poor pruning techniques can seriously



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### The many benefits of trees

#### Beautiful, friendly neighborhoods

Trees add beauty to your neighborhood and make it a nicer place to live. People are more likely to walk down streets and meet their neighbors in areas with trees.

#### Cleaner air and water

Trees catch rain drops and slow stormwater runoff, which cleans the water and reduces the risk of floods. Trees also make our environment healthier by removing pollution from the air.

#### Increase the value of your home

Trees can increase the sale price of your home from 5 to 20 percent.

#### Safer, quieter environment

Trees help calm and slow cars and reduce traffic noise in our neighborhoods. Areas surrounded by trees and greenery have been shown to have fewer instances of crime compared to similar areas without trees.

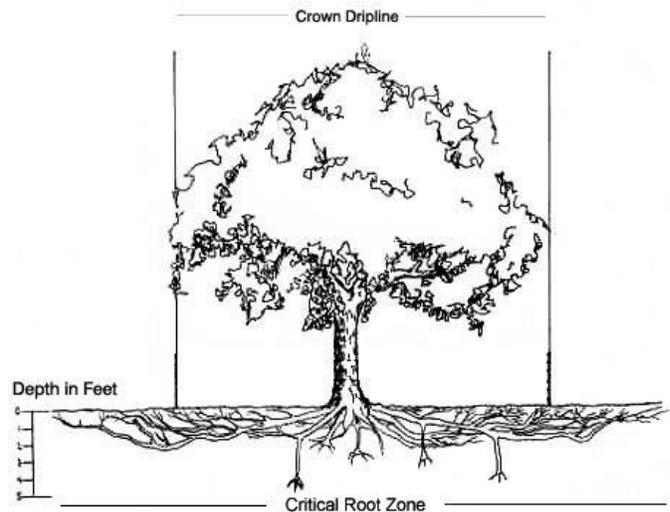
damage your tree so think about hiring a certified arborist. See the City's pruning guide if you want to try it yourself ([www.seattle.gov/transportation/pruningguides.htm](http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/pruningguides.htm)). Groups like Plant Amnesty and Seattle Tilth give workshops on pruning.

- **Only stake a tree if necessary to hold it upright. Be sure stakes do not rub** against the trunk or branches, causing wounds which can lead to disease and tree death. **Remove stakes 1-2 years after planting.** You can test if stakes are ready to be removed by grasping the tree at the bottom of the trunk and gently shaking it. If the soil around the tree does not move, the tree's roots are strong and the stakes can be removed. Many newly planted trees do not need stakes.

## Mature trees need care, too

Large, mature trees provide greater benefits than smaller, younger trees.

- **Never cut the top off a tree!** This can make the tree less stable and unsafe. Topping will not work to keep your tree small, and maintaining it will be more difficult and expensive.
- Trees can **frame your view**, adding to its beauty. Severe pruning will cause the tree to grow thicker and faster, and can eventually kill the tree.
- **Water is important** for all trees when it is hot. Even mature trees may need to be watered well once or twice a month during the hot, dry season. Water slowly and where the roots are--not at the trunk.
- **Remove invasive plants.** English ivy is a weed that grows up the tree and can kill it. Remove the ivy or cut through the ivy in a ring around the base of the tree.
- **Protect the roots.** Most tree roots are within the top two feet of soil, and they grow well beyond the ends of the branches. Digging in this area can cut through tree roots and eventually kill the tree.



## Protect Your Trees

Protect your trees from damage to help them live long, healthy lives.

- Use care with lawn mowers and string trimmers.
- Do not nail things to trees.
- Do not place heavy materials and equipment under trees.
- Do not pile mulch or soil against the trunk.
- All materials used to support new trees should be removed after the first 1-2 years.
- Do not wrap wire, twine or other materials around the trunk or branches of a tree.

Find more information at [www.seattle.gov/trees](http://www.seattle.gov/trees)