

Code Compliance

— guidelines on Seattle regulations governing safety and quality of life

Weed and Vegetation Enforcement

Updated July 16, 2019

This Tip outlines the owner's responsibilities for preventing weeds and vegetation from overgrowing the public right-of-way. This Tip also provides guidelines for trimming weeds and overgrowth including trees, and instructions on how to file a complaint about weeds and vegetation.

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 (SDCI) 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.

If the overgrown vegetation comes from trees, there are additional considerations. Under Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) codes, trees may not obstruct streetlights, traffic signs or signals, or views of streets

or intersections. 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 SDCI approval to remove the tree. You also need a SDCI permit to remove vegetation, including trees, in environmentally critical areas such as a steep slope. See more information on these requirements at [www.seattle.gov/sdci/permits/permits-we-issue-\(a-z\)/tree-and-vegetation-removal](http://www.seattle.gov/sdci/permits/permits-we-issue-(a-z)/tree-and-vegetation-removal).

For more information on private property owner responsibilities in the public right-of-way, visit www.seattle.gov/transportation/projects-and-programs/programs/maintenance-and-paving/property-owners-responsibilities.

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 Code requires a 3-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

Most vegetation issues may be reported using the City's Find It, Fix It, Service Request Mobile App. You can download it at www.seattle.gov/customer-service-bureau/find-it-fix-it-mobile-app.

Otherwise, to report a potential code violation use the phone numbers or links listed below. When you 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.

SDCI – Code Compliance Division

(206) 615-0808

www.seattle.gov/sdci/codes

Vegetation on Public Property

Seattle Department of Transportation

206-684-ROAD (7623)

Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation – Horticulture Program

(206) 684-4113

Vegetation Management

Seattle City Light

(206) 386-1650

www.seattle.gov/light/vegetation-management/tree-trimming/

Fire Prevention (including dry vegetation)

Seattle Fire Marshal

(206) 386-1450

www.seattle.gov/fire

Noxious Weed Information

King County Noxious Weeds Control Program

(206) 296-0290

<https://kingcounty.gov/services/environment/animals-and-plants/noxious-weeds.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/permits-and-services/permits/street-tree-permits

SDCI 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/sdci/permits/permits-we-issue-\(a-z\)/tree-and-vegetation-removal](http://www.seattle.gov/sdci/permits/permits-we-issue-(a-z)/tree-and-vegetation-removal)

Access to Information

Links to electronic versions of SDCI **Tips**, **Director's Rules**, and **Forms** are available on the "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.