

# Street Trees in Philadelphia

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### What are some of the benefits of street trees?

Street trees provide shade from the hot rays of the sun. The temperature is always several degrees cooler under the shade of a tree! Trees muffle noise from traffic and construction, help filter dust and pollution particles from the air (the air is actually cleaner and healthier beneath and around trees!), help reduce flooding from storm water runoff, and provide habitat for wildlife. Trees give beauty and charm to neighborhoods, can increase property values by 10-15%, and can encourage local businesses.

### Who owns the street trees?

The City of Philadelphia has jurisdiction over street trees.

### What is a street tree?

A street tree is a tree located between the sidewalk and the curb. A tree growing in your yard is not a street tree even though its branches might be hanging over into the sidewalk or street. The Park will go out to the site to determine if it's a street tree or not.

### Who is responsible for street trees?

Fairmount Park manages all street trees (as well as park trees) in the City of Philadelphia and is responsible for planting, pruning and removing street trees. Most of this work is done by contracted arborists overseen by the Park.

### Who do I call to get a street tree planted?

Call Fairmount Park's Street Tree Management Division at 215.685.4363 or send an email to them at [fpc.streettree.info@phila.gov](mailto:fpc.streettree.info@phila.gov).

### How long does it take to get a street tree planted?

The wait to get your street tree planted can be one year, depending on resources. The Park plants street trees in spring and fall. Spring planting begins mid-March; fall planting begins at the end of October. The planting schedule depends on weather conditions and when the vendor can get trees.

### Who chooses the street tree?

The resident can request a particular species, but the Park arborist who visits the site makes the final determination. There are many factors that go into choosing a street tree: the Park chooses a variety of species so that they don't create a monoculture and looks at the surroundings--are there overhead wires, telephone poles, driveways?--all of which determine what the species will be and whether the species should be large, medium, small or columnar. Check out the City of Philadelphia's recommended street tree list at [www.fairmountpark.org/RecommendedTreeList.asp](http://www.fairmountpark.org/RecommendedTreeList.asp)

### Planting the street tree

A large hole, called a tree pit, is dug for the new street tree. The minimum tree pit size is 3'x3' and depends on the site conditions. After the tree is planted, the contractor mulches the tree pit area, stakes the new tree, and waters it.

### What can residents do to help care for their street tree?

Residents should water their street trees with 15-20 gallons of water each week. One of the biggest stresses on newly planted street trees is not getting enough water. Residents can also remove weeds from the tree pit and

should not plant anything (other than the tree) in the tree pit. Weeds, flowers and ground cover compete for water, nutrients and root space and can put stress on your street tree. Residents can help by being careful with car doors and bikes, which can damage the protective bark. To do anything more to your street trees, such as major pruning or removing, you must obtain a permit. Contact Fairmount Park when you observe a problem. The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) has a program called “Tree Tenders” that provides 9 hours of training on tree biology, urban stresses, tree identification, basic pruning, root care, tree planting, and community organizing. For more information about Tree Tenders, call PHS at 215.988.8844 or check out their website at [www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org](http://www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org).

### Who do I call when there is a problem?

To report a problem with your street tree, call Fairmount Park’s Street Tree Management Division at 215.685.4363 or send an email to [fpc.streettree.info@phila.gov](mailto:fpc.streettree.info@phila.gov). If it is after normal working hours, leave a voice mail message. Hours are 7:00 am – 3:30 pm Monday through Friday except City holidays. The Park will send someone out within 7-10 working days to look at it.

If it is an emergency, call 911. Examples of emergencies are a tree or branch falls and is blocking access to the sidewalk or street; a tree or branch falls on your roof. Someone from the Park will be dispatched through radio.

### Will the Park remove a tree I don’t like?

No. The Park does not take down trees because people don’t like them. There has to be a valid problem for the Park to remove it. Having to rake up fallen leaves, seeds and other fruits is not considered a valid problem.

### What if the tree is breaking up my sidewalk?

If a street tree is breaking up the sidewalk, the Park will come out to look at it. The Park will make a decision on a case-by-case basis according to the condition of the tree and what’s going on around it. Often the solution is for the property owner to replace the paving.

### Will the Park take care of a problem with a tree in my yard?

No. The Park is not responsible for trees growing in yards. Trees growing in the yard are the resident’s responsibility.

### What about trees growing in alleyways?

The City only responds to emergencies with trees in alleyways. Emergencies would include a tree or branch that falls and blocks the alleyway, falls on your roof, or damages your property. For emergencies with trees in your alleyway, call 215.683.0222.

### What about trees growing through cracks in the sidewalk?

Trees growing through a crack are not street trees. Any tree growing through a crack should be pulled out. The resident can do this.

### What are some of the stresses on street trees?

The biggest stress on new trees is not getting enough water. Stresses on street trees in general include car doors banging into the tree’s trunk, branches getting torn off (wounds allow insects and disease to enter), road salt (the Park tries to choose salt-tolerant trees), dog feces (dog feces are high in acidity and nitrates which are harmful to trees), pollution, harmful insects and disease.

## Fairmount Park - Street Tree Management Division

Hours: 7:00 am – 3:30 pm Monday through Friday except City holidays.

215.685.4363 ~ [fpc.streettree.info@phila.gov](mailto:fpc.streettree.info@phila.gov)

[www.fairmountpark.org/StreetTreeIntro.asp](http://www.fairmountpark.org/StreetTreeIntro.asp)

For alleyway trees only, call 215.683.0222

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