



LINDEN SHADE TREE COMMISSION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CITY TREES

Commissioners:

Chairman Jeffrey A. Tandul, LLA, ASLA, M.Arch., Ron Martins, Judy England-McCarthy, Renee Banks, Mike Alexy

Question: Can I plant my own trees and or landscaping in the City Right of Way?

Answer: NO.



- There is significant potential liability for the owner and City.
- Utility mark-outs must be made prior to any excavation and conflicts considered with underground, above ground and overhead utilities.
- Trees must be selected for long term survival and durability and mature size needs to be matched to the planting space. Owners most often plant inappropriate varieties.
- Branching height must be suitable for street tree planting to allow for current and future passage of pedestrians and vehicles. Owners often plant shrubs or trees with low branching height or other characteristics not suitable for street tree planting.

- Sight triangles at street intersections are often obscured by landscape plantings presenting liability and safety issues. All landscaping (plants or structures) must be below three (3) feet in mature height with 25 feet of the point of intersection of the curb/paving line on each side of corner lots.
- Trees must be located to avoid conflicts with stop signs and fire hydrants. Owners often plant inappropriate varieties and too close to stop signs and fire hydrants creating a health, safety and welfare danger to the public and themselves.
- Rights-of-way often extend well inside the sidewalk and/or curb/pavement line in areas with no sidewalks. Distance varies through the City. Check your property survey or with the Linden Engineering Department for the location of the right of way boundary. In most areas the right of way is 10 to 15 feet in from the curb or pavement line.
- **DO NOT PLANT ANY ANNUALS OR OTHER PLANTS AROUND THE BASE OF TREES!** This can harm the roots by digging and the excess water and fertilizer at the root ball can cause girdling roots.
- If you desire a City Tree, contact the Shade Tree Commission, your Council Representative, or Office of the Mayor.



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Question: Can I remove a City Tree?

Answer: NO.

- It is **illegal and a criminal act** to remove trees on City Rights-of-Way. The owner will be responsible for the value of the tree (mature trees have values of \$4,000-\$20,000+ depending on size and variety- the municipal court may assess additional criminal penalties (prison) and/or fines that can often be double or triple the value of the tree.
- The City has lost over 15,000 trees to the Asian Longhorn Beetle infestation. The City, State and Federal governments have spent a significant investment to try to restore canopy and help reduce energy costs.



Question: Can I prune a City

Tree? **Answer: NO.**



- It is **illegal** to prune any tree on City Rights of way or property with one exception. You are permitted to carefully prune sucker growth that comes out of the base of the tree/root ball as part of your regular lawn maintenance. If you are not sure how to do it, one of our Commissioners will be happy to instruct you on the proper methods and tools.
- There are significant safety issues which are not limited to potential electrocution, falls, damage to property or the tree from falling branches, etc.
- There are liability issues for the City and Owner. Also, most often the pruning is performed excessively or improperly leading to premature failure or death of the tree.

Question: Can I water a City Tree?

Answer: YES.



- Watering in the first year after planting is important.
- Water should be applied as a soak, not just sprinkling the surface. Sprinkling encourages girdling and shallow rooting, apply a soak with a hose, or clean, unused bucket- 5 to 20 gallons during dry spells, particularly June through September/October
- Even if it rains, water may not make it down to the root ball.
- Be sure to water where the root ball interfaces with surrounding soil, not just near the trunk. Avoid lawn sprinklers spraying on the bark



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Question: Can I place birdhouses, wind chimes, ornaments, other items, signs and/or lights on or around City Trees?

Answer: NO. It is illegal to place such items in City Trees.



- There is significant Liability exposure to owners and the City.
- Life safety concerns including, but not limited to potential electrocution of people and/or pets, tripping hazards, distractions to drivers.
- Lights often damage trees in the process of being installed and removed. Lights that are not removed will girdle and kill City Trees.
- Heat from lights wrapped around the trunk and stems can result in winter damage as cells do not go into "winter mode" and cause damage similar to scald.



- Solar powered/battery powered lights are PROHIBITED on City Trees & City Right of Way
- It is **PROHIBITED** to place any type of signs on City Trees and or in the City Right of Way, including, but not limited to "Lost Dog/Cat/Pet", "House for sale", Garage Sales, etc.



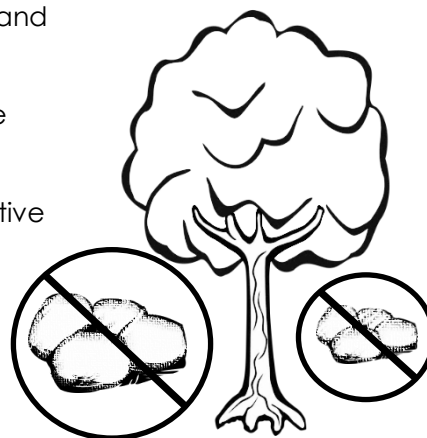
- Penetrating the bark opens places the tree at risk for disease/insect infestation. The cambium, just under the bark can be damaged. This is the part of the tree where new growth occurs. Metal embedded in the tree as it grows can become a hazard during removal at the end of the life of the tree.



Question: Can I place rock, stone mulch and/or boulders in the right of way and/or around trees?

Answer: NO.

- Rock and stone mulches keep the roots too hot in summer and "cook roots".
- Rocks often become projectiles under vehicle tires, or in the hands of "mischievous people".
- Owners often place plastic or weed fabric (which is ineffective anyway) under the rocks which prevent water, air and nutrients from reaching tree roots.
- Rocks/stones/boulders can become tripping hazards.
- Rocks increase the "heat island" effect and counteract the positive cooling effects of trees





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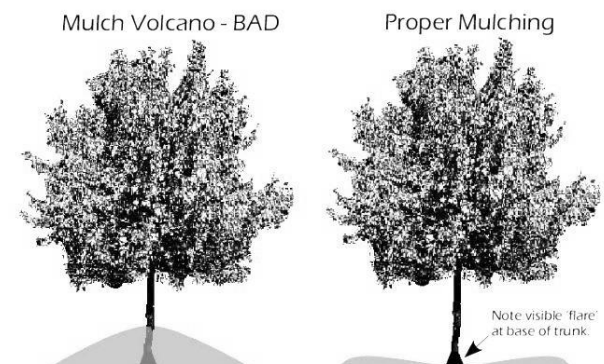
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Question: Can I pile mulch and or soil up around the City Tree:

Answer: NO.

- Light mulch 2" or less in the root zone, at least six (6") inches clear of the trunk can be acceptable. DO NOT pile on new mulch every year. On a yearly basis, loosen up the mulch to prevent clumping and blockage of air, water and nutrients.
- Containment devices/edging (not limited to bricks, plastic, metal, etc.) is **PROHIBITED!** They can harm tree roots and become trip and fall hazards.
- Excessive mulch prevents the free exchange of water, air and nutrients with tree roots.
- Mulch "volcanoes" encourage development of adventitious root systems (secondary root systems) that girdle trees, make them more susceptible to blow over, decay and insects. High mulch will kill a tree within a few years.
- The root collar of the tree should be clearly visible at the surface. The root collar is the flared area where the stem widens and flares out to meet the first true roots.



Question: My mower hits roots of the City tree, can I shave the roots?

Answer: NO.

- Shaving of roots encourages decay, insects & failure of the tree.
- Most owners set their mower height too low. Set mower height a minimum 2.5 inches. In summer increase to 3 inches. This reduces the need for water and fertilizer, shades out weeds and limits conflict with tree roots.
- Evergreen ground cover could be considered as an alternate to turf grass. It will reduce maintenance in the long term.
- Protect the trunk of trees from damage by mowers and trimmers.

