

City of Mount Vernon, NY
Standard for Tree Planting in the Municipal Right-of-Way

Purpose:

To provide comprehensive guidelines ensuring the proper planting, growth, and sustainability of trees within the municipal right-of-way. This standard promotes environmental health, enhances aesthetic value, and ensures public safety and accessibility.

1. Tree Selection

- **Native Species Requirement:**
 - Trees planted within the municipal right-of-way must be native species suitable for urban environments. Approved species include but are not limited to:
 - Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)
 - Northern Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*)
 - American Linden (*Tilia americana*)
 - Honeylocust (*Gleditsia triacanthos* - thornless varieties only)
 - Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)
 - Approval of species not listed above must be obtained from the Parks Supervisor.
- **Caliper Size:**
 - All newly planted trees must have a minimum caliper of 2.5 - 3 inches measured at 6 inches above the root ball.

2. Tree Well Dimensions

- **Standard Size:**
 - Tree wells shall be a minimum of 5 feet by 5 feet (25 square feet) to ensure adequate soil volume, root growth, and water infiltration.
- **Depth:**
 - Tree wells must have a minimum depth of 3 feet to accommodate root growth and proper soil amendments.

3. Tree Planting Specifications

- **Planting Depth:**
 - Trees must be planted with the root flare visible at or slightly above ground level. Do not bury the root flare.
 - Planting hole depth should be equal to the height of the root ball, and the width should be at least twice the diameter of the root ball.

- **Spacing Requirements:**

- **Large trees** (mature height over 60 feet): 45 - 60 feet apart.
- **Medium trees** (mature height between 30 and 60 feet): 35 -50 feet apart.
- **Small trees** (mature height under 30 feet): 25 – 40 feet apart.

Additionally, trees should not be planted within 30 feet of an intersection, 15 feet of driveways and alleys, or 10 feet of utility poles or hydrants. A planting space of at least 50 square feet is recommended, and for tree lawns less than 3 feet wide, trees with a mature trunk diameter exceeding 12 inches are not suitable.

- **Soil Requirements:**

- Existing soil should be amended with organic matter such as compost (minimum 25% by volume) to ensure healthy growth. Backfill soil should be thoroughly tamped and watered to eliminate air pockets.

- **Mulching:**

- Apply a 3-inch layer of organic mulch (shredded bark or wood chips), extending to the edge of the tree well but leaving a 3-inch clear radius around the trunk to prevent decay.

Staking and Protection:

- Trees must be staked using biodegradable tree ties and wooden stakes only if necessary for stability. Stakes must be removed within one year.

4. Environmentally Friendly Tree Grate Options

Tree Grates:

- If tree grates are necessary, they must be ADA compliant, allow for expansion, and be made from environmentally friendly materials.
- Grates must allow water infiltration and air exchange, featuring a minimum opening area of 40%.

- **Alternative Ground Cover:**

- Developers are encouraged to use permeable paving materials or ground covers (such as low-growing native plants, permeable resin-bound aggregate, or decomposed granite) to facilitate natural irrigation, reduce heat island effect, and improve tree health.

5. Maintenance and Warranty

- **Initial Care:**

- Developers must provide watering using gator bags, pruning, and general maintenance for a period of 24 months after planting.

- **Replacement Guarantee:**

- Trees that fail within two years of planting must be replaced by the developer at no additional cost to the City.

6. Compliance and Enforcement

- **Inspections:**

- Tree installations will be inspected by the City Parks Supervisor or an authorized representative prior to project approval.

- **Penalties:**

- Non-compliance with these standards may result in fines, withholding of project approvals, or other enforcement actions as determined by the City.

7. Documentation

- **Submission Requirements:**

- Developers must submit a tree planting plan, including species selection, tree well dimensions, grate materials, and maintenance schedule for approval prior to permit issuance.