

PNPP TREE LEADER GUIDE: Responses to Residents' Common Tree Concerns

If resident/homeowner is concerned about the tree pit and where exactly it will go:

- The City Forester and/or the Director of PNPP will visit the potential site to determine where exactly the tree should go on the sidewalk and what size tree should be planted. Once this is done, they will mark the site on the curb with white spray paint.
- If necessary, we will cut the pavement to make a new pit, or to expand existing one (4x6 is the standard minimum tree pit size).
- We excavate the existing soil at each site and replace with new soil that is suitable for trees.

If resident/homeowner expresses concerns about root damage to sidewalks, roots in basement, root damage to sewer lines...

- We know a lot more now than we did 30 years ago about *what* trees to plant *where* in cities! We look at each potential site to make sure we can plant there, utilizing “right tree in the right place” best practices. (<https://www.treesaregood.org/treeowner/choosingtherighttree>)
- If a potential planting site is under power lines (the primary lines that run parallel to the street, not the wires that connect to the house), a smaller or an “open-canopy” tree will be planted as to not interfere with the wires. Smaller trees have smaller roots and are much less likely to damage sidewalks or underground utilities.
- We select tree planting sites far enough away from houses/buildings and in the right spot so that roots don't cause foundation/sewer damage.
- We make sure that the tree pit in the sidewalk is cut large enough that the trunk and roots don't damage the sidewalk as they expand.
- Before any site is approved for planting, Dig Safe will double-check to make sure that there is no interference with underground utilities (gas, water, electric, sewer) at the planting site.

If resident/homeowner is concerned about damage to property due to storms, leaves in gutters...

- First of all, it will be quite a while before the tree will be large enough to do any kind of real damage to property. Trees take many years to get big! The very large trees we see now were planted generations ago.
- One of the reasons that larger trees cause damage is because they didn't receive regular, structural pruning. We now have a block pruning program (through the Division of Forestry) to prune all city street trees on a 10 year cycle, and a Citizen Forester program so that young trees can be pruned early on. This way, branches pointed towards a building or leaning over the street can be removed before they cause harm.
- There are certain tree species that we have stopped planting as street trees in Providence because of their structural issues. PNPP and the Forestry Division are always working to track the performance of the trees we plant so we can continue learn what works best here.
- The benefits of trees far outweigh any inconveniences (such as leaves on the ground in the fall). Give homeowner/resident our tri-fold pamphlet for more information on tree benefits.

If potential steward is concerned about planting/watering commitment...

- If they are worried that they might not be able to attend the tree planting day, they can send a stand-in (friend, relative, neighbor) to help plant the tree in their absence. (Participants unable to physically plant trees can also help you on planting day by providing snacks or taking pictures!)
- The steward does not need to be the homeowner. It can be a tenant, or even a neighbor that's willing/able to steward a tree down the street!
- The new trees will need to be watered during the first two growing seasons (that means from about Easter to Halloween) 20 gallons per week.
 - This is not as time-consuming as it sounds. We suggest buying two-5 gallon buckets (a few dollars at Home Depot) and poking some nail holes in the bottom. Then once a week, you place them on either side of the tree, fill up the buckets, let them drain, and repeat.
- Check to see that there is an outside water source & hose that reaches the planting site.

If resident has questions, concerns or requests about the kind of tree they'll get...

- Emphasize that we select the appropriate species for each site (size, shape, root system, etc); taking into consideration all the parameters (wires, utilities buildings, etc.) We also plant a wide variety of species each season, to ensure we have a diverse mix of trees throughout our city!
- If someone has a strong concern/interest in tree species at their planting site, we will try to work with them, within the parameters of what's available and appropriate for the site--though no we can't offer guarantees).
- We will give Tree Leaders the final species list on the week of the planting.

Remember: Some people will just not be interested in trees, no matter how much information you give them, and that's ok! Fortunately, there are enough people who *do* want trees--at sites that need them--to keep us busy planting for a long time :)

Some useful sites for additional tree information:

- International Society of Arborists: <https://www.treesaregood.org/>
- Arbor Day Foundation: <https://www.arborday.org/trees/>
- The Nature Conservancy - Healthy Trees, Healthy Cities: <http://www.conservationgateway.org/ConservationPractices/cities/hthc>

If someone has a question that you are unable to answer, or is requesting more information, feel free to reach out to Cassie Tharinger at 401.368.5380 or ctharinger@pnpp.org!

