

**Urban Forestry Commission Position Paper on
Tree Standards for Species Selection, Planting, Maintenance, and Protection
Adopted 9/7/11**

Tree standards are critical to building a healthy sustainable urban forest and to achieving 30% canopy cover in Seattle. These standards should rest on four fundamental principles. First, standards need to apply to every tree in Seattle. Second, standards should refer to one list of recommended trees, including one central source for planting, maintenance and protection. Third, these city-wide tree standards should be written from a lay-person's perspective to encourage widespread adoption. Finally, standards must be accessible and easily found using a standard internet search engine such as Google. By adhering to these guidelines, tree standard information can be most widely applied.

Of course, specific situations require adaptation. Standards are not regulatory, but regulations can be applied using this information where appropriate. Further, standards are not just for public lands, but are also recommendations and voluntary guidance for planting on private lots. The goal for all is a healthier, more integrated and better connected urban forest.

Standards are listed in the sections below and organized by selection, planting, maintenance and protection. Each section offers broad guidance. Ultimately, standards should offer sufficient detail to provide useful information to anyone who is planning any of the actions in the following four sections with any tree in Seattle.

1. Tree Selection Should:

- Use existing resources and build upon, refine or adopt information from the SDOT and/or DPD plant lists. Also, take into account SCL, Parks and SDOT's recent efforts to remove invasive species from the master street tree list. The goal is one list that is not specific to any agency or property ownership.
- Take into account the size of the mature tree from the seedling or sapling that is being planted. Use information from the SDOT right-of-way manual for proper location for planting. Standards should provide help in visualizing future potential tree growth. This would obviously include information on setbacks from and avoidance of driveways, sidewalks, curbs and utilities.

2. Planting and Establishment (1-3 years) Should:

- Use the best available information from the Department of Transportation *Street Tree Planting Procedures*, the Seattle Pedestrian Master Plan Issue Paper: *Trees and Sidewalks*, and James Urban's *Up By the Roots*. Requirements should include:
 - i. Confirming sufficient ground area and soil volume for planting sites. Recommend generally a 30 square feet area minimum and 300-500 cubic feet soil volume minimum.
 - ii. Proper methods for transferring potted trees from containers to the ground, including excavation, root treatment, tree placement, soil treatment, and watering requirements. Guidelines can be taken from Green Seattle

Partnership volunteer steward Field Guide handbook or other agency sources.

3. Protection (4+ years) –
 - Should protect root zone inside and outside development areas.
 - Should include both short and long-term protection
 - Should have standard recommended for tree protection outside of Development Regulations. (people need better information to understand what impacts trees).
 - Should include guidelines for maintenance and watering
 - Should include guidelines for under planting to protect the root zone
4. Pruning & Maintenance –
 - Should prohibit topping (variance required for special case)
 - Should include SDOT's pruning guidance for street trees and shrubs
 - Should include recommendation to prune a tree at least three times in its first ten years of growth
 - Should fund educational outreach

References

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