



Cambridge Urban



ForestFriends

Tree Care Guide

Thank you for being a Forest Friend and nurturing your tree. By watering and caring for your tree, you help to sustain our urban forest.



Winter

Don't forget to fill out the annual tree checklist

Thank you for caring for your tree this year! Let the City know what went well and what you struggled with so we can continue to improve our programs.

If you need to communicate with the City

For new street tree requests, tree pruning requests, tree removal request and stump removal request, please go to "<https://www.cambridgema.gov/commonwealth-connect>"

Join forces for a healthy city

Spread the word! Let your neighbors and friends know about the City's programs such as Team Tree and [new name for the Front Yard Tree Program]. More people helping out means a healthier forest, and a healthier city.



Follow the salt trail

Sidewalk salt can help to avoid slippery sidewalks, but it can also damage our city's trees. Take a moment to observe salt/deicer use in and around your tree. Where does the salt end up? Does it pile within your tree pit? Deicers are a better choice for trees than salt—encouraging your neighbors to switch is a great way to advocate for trees.



Photo credit: The Middlebury Landscape Blog

Spring

Flush out the salt

If you noticed during the winter that salt or deicer may have accumulated in the tree well, now is a great time to water your tree and flush out the salt or deicer.

Testing of Cambridge soil has shown that salt usage is one of the biggest dangers to tree health. After the winter snow has melted and the soils have thawed, trees benefit from being flushed with water and regular watering.

A few things to keep in mind:

- Now is the time to start watering your street tree! Street trees need about 20 gallons of water per week.

- Gator Bags are recommended for trees with a trunk diameter of 4 inches or less. Gator Bags can be picked up free of charge at the front office of the Department of Public Works at 147 Hampshire St Cambridge, MA 02139.

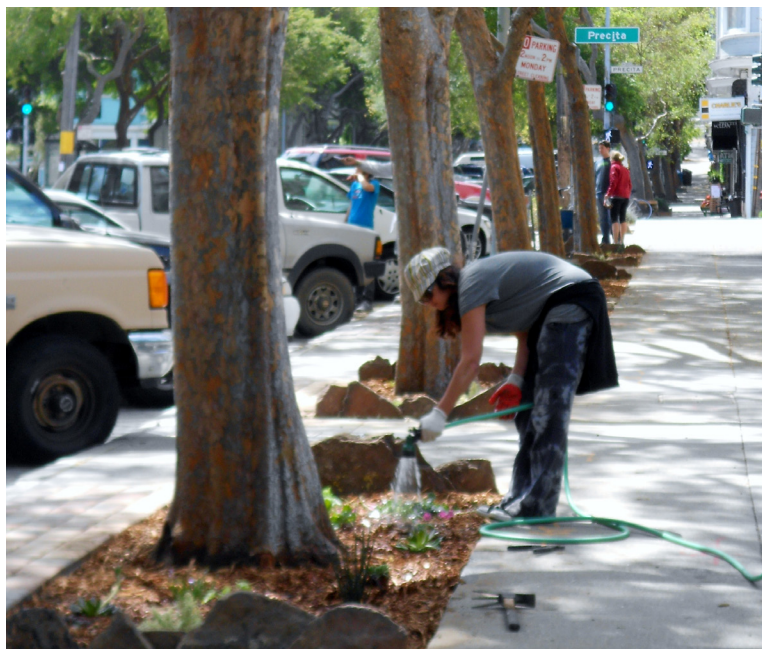


Photo credit: Friends of the Urban Forest, San Francisco

Early Spring

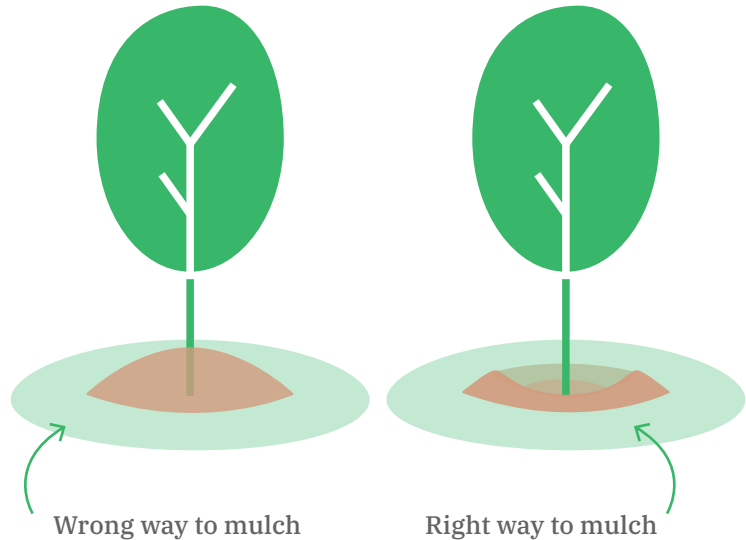
Spring

Give your tree the protection it needs

Use compost or compost mulch blend around the base of your street tree. This provides nutrients, helps regulate the tree's moisture, and prevents weeds from sprouting in the tree pit. Mulch that consists of wood chips and shredded bark provide very little nutrients for your tree so please use compost or compost mulch if possible.

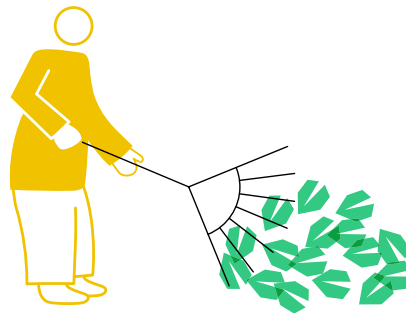
A few things to keep in mind:

- Use 2-3 inches of compost mulch blend wood chips or shredded bark.
- Keep all mulch at least 2-3 inches away from the trunk.
- Do not add a "volcano" of mulch around the tree



Keep it clean

Trash and pet waste are harmful for trees, particularly liquid waste that can dissolve into the soil. Now that winter is ending, take a look at the tree well and remove any solid waste that may have collected there.



Weed to make room for your tree

Flowers and weeds compete with trees for water, nutrients, and soil space. Keep an eye out for any weeds in the tree well, and remove them when you see them. If you would like to plant your tree well please keep in mind that tree health always comes first. Infrequent and careful planting within the tree well can help reduce soil compaction and provide food for pollinators. Perennials with small roots/bulbs can be planted once every year or 2 to beautify the tree well. Frequent gardening or planting of annuals increases the likelihood that small tree roots will be damaged during gardening. These small "feeder" roots are vital to the tree because they absorb water and nutrients.

If you decide to plant your tree well here are a few tips:

- Always remember the tree's health comes first
- Plant as infrequently as possible to avoid damaging small tree roots
- Choose plants that don't have deep roots and don't require much water
- Do not plant within 1 foot of the tree trunk
- Do not plant grasses as they have thick, matted roots



Photo credit: cleanwatergrow.com

Some bulbs you can plant in the tree pit are listed below:

Crocus
Tulips
Muscari
Daffodils
Dahlias
Freesia



Mid-Late Spring

Summer

Your tree is thirsty, water it!

Watering your tree is the most important thing you can do to keep it healthy.

Street trees need approximately 20 gallons of water per week. It is recommended that you water the tree at least once a week, between the months of May and October, by filling a Gator Bag with 20 gallons of water using your garden hose. This is especially important for newly planted street trees and is the most impactful thing you can do for your tree.

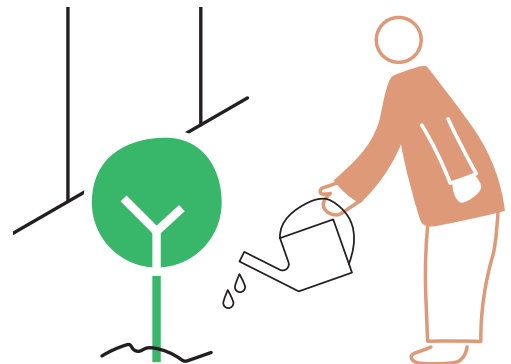


Do you need a Gator Bag?

Gator Bags are recommended for trees with a trunk diameter of 4 inches or less. Gator Bags can be picked up free of charge at the front office of the Department of Public Works at 147 Hampshire St Cambridge, MA 02139. They are collected by the city in November, and so if you wish to keep yours, be sure to remove it before then. If the City removes your Gator Bag, you can pick one up from the Department of Public Works in the spring.

What if your hose doesn't reach the tree?

If your hose does not reach the tree use any container (watering can or even repurposing a plastic milk jug) to fill the Gator Bag or to slowly water the base of the tree directly. Compacted soil reduces a water's ability to infiltrate the soil and can lead to water runoff. Water runoff will erode soil and mulch. If the soil is compacted gently loosen it with a trowel so water can percolate in.



It's time for a check-up

Trees need a check-up every once in a while, too! Observe your tree to see if there are any signs of pests or disease.

Trees have two main pest enemies: insects and disease. Diverse types of trees and regions are prone to various types of insects and diseases that can impact tree health. Both insect infestation and disease can look similar but knowing what is impacting your tree's health is vital to finding the right treatment solution. Here are some common signs of pest infestation and what you can do to help minimize damage to your tree's health.

What to look for?

Some signs that should alert you to a pest problem include:

- Thinning leaves or needles
- Holes bored into leaves
- Unusual leaf sizes
- Discoloration of needles or leaves
- Stalled branch growth
- Holes or loose bark on the trunk
- Lifting roots

Pests/diseases identified include: anthracnose, aphids, bark beetles, borers, emerald ash borer, gall insects, leaf beetle, leaf spot, powdery mildew, rust, scab, scale, slime flux and tip blight.

The damage of some of these pest and diseases are shown on the right.



Emerald Ash Borer damage on trunk



Anthracnose damage on leaf



Bark beetle damage on trunk



Powdery mildew damage on leaf



Tip blight damage on leaves



Leaf beetle damage

What to do if you see issues?

If you notice a new or worsening pest, disease, or health issue with your tree please report it through the Commonwealth Connect app. If you see an emergency situation with your street tree such as a hanging branch or a significant lean that has recently worsened please report it to the DPW front office right away (617-349-4800).

Fall

Protect your tree

Make sure that there aren't any external threats to your tree's health.

It is important to not damage the trunk of the tree or compact the soil around the tree roots. Damaging the bark of the tree can cause health issues.

- Do not lock bikes to trees.
- Do not put signs on trees using nails or tape.
- Do not break or rip off branches.



Photo credit: Streets Blog LA

Water your tree

Don't forget to regularly water your street tree! It needs about 20 gallons of water per week.



Don't smother your tree

Tree roots need oxygen, just like you. When too much soil is piled up at the base of the tree, there will not be enough air in the soil for the tree.

What you can do to help:

- Make sure the soil is level
- Remove any walls or raised beds around your street tree
- Avoid walking in the tree well to reduce soil compaction

