

Street Trees

CityPlan

Riley Park/South Cambie RPSC

Why We Need Street Trees

Trees:

- absorb CO₂ and pollutants in the air;
- supply oxygen;
- reduce heat in summer;
- reduce wind in winter;
- reduce storm water;
- increase privacy;
- increase property values;
- provide food and shelter for wildlife; and
- make neighbourhoods more beautiful.

Tree Facts

Vancouver street trees have been in the care and custody of the Vancouver Park Board since 1917. The City of Vancouver's goal is to have street trees on every street that has favourable growing conditions. Currently, Vancouver has over 124,000 street trees. Every year over 3,000 new street trees are planted while 1,200 have to be removed because they are diseased, dying, or pose a public threat.

Tree Selection

The Park Board tries to select the best tree for the site, matching the mature size of the tree with the width of the boulevard, and considering overhead wires, utilities, building set-backs, and other constraints to potential growth. In each neighbourhood, the Park Board attempts to maintain a healthy diversity of different kinds of trees, and selects hardy species and cultivars that are more resistant to disease, pests, drought, compaction, pollution, and urban stress. Also important is the aesthetic quality; selecting trees with spring flowers, or autumn colours, unusual or attractive bark, leaves and branches, or interesting winter form. To maximise environmental benefits,

the Park Board will generally select the largest tree that will grow on a site without causing problems. The City's tree inventory is made up of nearly 600 different species and cultivars.

Residents' preferences for specific trees are accommodated where possible.

To find out which kinds of trees have done well as street trees in Vancouver, or which are recommended on an experimental basis, consult the Preferred Street Tree Species List, available by request from the Park Board (604-257-8600).

Why Doesn't the City Plant More Native Trees?

The growing conditions for street trees are very challenging. Urban soils are often poor in nutrients, compacted by the use of heavy construction equipment, waterlogged in winter and too dry in summer. Air pollution, increased air temperatures and lack of soil volume add to a street tree's problems. Many trees native to the Lower Mainland wouldn't thrive under these tough urban conditions.

Tree Stocks

In order to establish a reliable source of street trees, the Park Board established a nursery in Campbell River Valley Park in the District of Langley. This 8-hectare (20-acre) nursery holds about 10,000 trees. Future street trees are purchased as inexpensive "liner" stock. An average of 2,000 trees is harvested from the farm each year.

Planting Program

You can call the Vancouver Park Board Street Tree line at 604 257-8600 to request that trees be planted in your neighbourhood. An inspector will visit the site, determine the appropriateness of planting, and advise residents on the schedule for tree planting. Depending on the waiting list, your request will be filled during the next planting season, or the year after. Planting season is from the end of October to the end of March. The Street Trees Planting Program receive over 5,000 service requests a year.

Can Residents Plant Their Own Street Trees?

The Park Board is responsible for the care and maintenance of street trees, including trees that have been donated by residents. If residents would like to plant their own trees anywhere on a boulevard or public right-of way they must obtain the Park Board's permission prior to planting. A Park Board Inspector will visit the site and assess the appropriateness of the planting site and discuss the species selection, tree size and planting requirements. For more information, contact the Street Tree Program number at 604-257-8600.

Street Tree Guidelines

The street tree guidelines detail the various clearance requirements for street trees, and spell out planting instructions. Certain clearances are needed from street tree to street lights, poles, commercial driveways, fire hydrants, manholes, street corners, overhead wires, parking meters, stop signs, buildings, bus zones and underground utilities.

For more information on the Street Tree Guidelines, call Street Trees at 604-257-8600.

Who Pays for Street Trees?

The Park Board plants street trees under four main programs: Capital, Local Improvement, Greenways and Replacement.

New green spaces provided through the Greenways and other street beautification programs are paid by the City and are often enhanced with trees and other plant material funded by the Park Board.

Private development in commercial areas usually requires street trees to be planted by the permit applicant. Commercial tree planting sites are identified during the Development Permit process. The Park Board approves the proper species, tree placement and planting pit design. When street trees are planted in connection with a building construction project, the developer pays for the street trees.

When street trees get planted as part of a Local Improvement Project (LIP) that includes building curbs and gutters, the costs are shared between the City and adjacent homeowners.

Replacement trees or new plantings identified by the Park Board are paid for by the Park Board.

Who is Responsible for Fallen Leaves and Clean up

Homeowners are responsible for cleaning up fallen leaves from sidewalks and boulevards adjacent to their properties.

Tree Maintenance

The Park Board has a street tree management program called TreeCare, designed to improve care of current stock and to substantially increase the planting of street trees over the next two decades. According to TreeCare, street trees are pruned for safety reasons and for horticultural

purposes on a seven-year cycle. Trees are not pruned to reduce size, to improve views or to control the shedding of leaves. Generally, only dead, dangerous or severely diseased trees are removed and replaced.

Arboriculture staff prune over 17,500 trees each year.

Crews systematically prune at least 1/7th of all trees in each of the 22 neighbourhoods annually. During maintenance of each street tree, staff update information regarding trunk diameter, height and tree condition. Prior to entering a scheduled neighbourhood, staff inspect every tree and prioritize the work that needs to be done. As well, during the year, Tree Inspectors, responding to service requests from the public, designate specific blocks for pruning, or prioritize street tree maintenance.

For information on TreeCare, contact 607-257-8600.

You Can Help a Tree!

Newly planted trees need protection and attention. It is a good idea to water new trees during the summer. They need about five gallons twice a week, and are exempt from any watering restrictions in summer.

Be careful not to bump the tree with car doors, lawn mowers or weed eaters, and avoid placing heavy objects where they compact the root zone of the tree.

Source: Park Board, City of Vancouver