

# Minimum Standards for NYS DEC Tree Planting Projects

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program (Round 15)

Guidelines for Awardees

The following are minimum standards for DEC for tree planting (<http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5303.html>) grant projects. Where local ordinances and guidelines require more stringent standards, use the more stringent standards. All tree planting work should be supervised by a qualified professional and follow the ANSI A300 standards for tree planting.

## Planning

A detailed tree planting plan/ Scope of Work and five-year maintenance plan must be developed with input from local agencies to avoid conflicts. Where underground or above ground utilities are present, contact Dig Safely New York (<https://www.digsafelynewyork.com>). NYS DEC recommends the planting of native species and prohibits or regulates the introduction of invasive species <https://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/99141.html>

## Tree Species Selection

1. Species will be selected to fit the planting site, taking into consideration soils, rooting space, overhead space, adjacent utilities and buildings, drainage, and other site conditions.
2. All species need to be appropriate for the hardiness zone in which they are located.
3. All trees used will be true to name. Size and grading standards will conform to the American Standard for Nursery Stock as established by AmericanHort (<https://www.americanhort.org/>).
4. It is recommended that no species make up more than 10% of the entire urban forest population.

## Site Selection

1. Sites should be inspected prior to planting. Avoid potential conflicts with utilities, buildings, lines of sight and other infrastructure. The soil at the planting site should be analyzed and tested for pH, structure, texture, density, nutrients, and percolation. Tree species selected for planting should be appropriate for the selected planting site. Please remember, planting a tree is a long-term investment. Proper site selection/ preparation and species selection is vital to a successful project.
2. No tree with a mature trunk diameter greater than 12 inches will be planted in a tree lawn less than 3 ft. wide; a planting space of at least 50 sq. ft. is recommended.
3. Trees will not be planted within 30 ft. of an intersection or 15 ft. of driveways and alleys.
4. Trees will not be planted within 10 ft. of utility poles or hydrants.
5. Trees should be spaced an appropriate distance apart. For street trees: large trees (mature height greater than 60 ft.) minimum of 45 ft. apart, medium trees (mature height between 30 ft. and 60 ft.) minimum of 35 ft. apart, small trees (mature height less than 30 ft.) minimum of 25 ft. apart.
6. Only trees with mature heights less than 30 ft. should be planted under or near power lines.

## Planting Standards

1. Holes dug for planting of trees will be a minimum of 12 inches larger than the diameter of the root system or root ball. Preferably, the hole should be two to three times the size of the root ball.
2. Trees will be planted no deeper than previously grown with allowance for settling. The root flair should be at or slightly above ground level.
3. Strings and twine will be removed from trunk of tree. Burlap and wire baskets will be removed or rolled down into hole.
4. Backfill with existing soil when suitable. Avoid using excessive amounts of organic matter.
5. When sensitive species are exposed to direct sun, wrap lower trunk with a tree wrap. Remove wrap after first growing season.
6. Bark mulch will be applied around the tree, up to 3 inches deep, in a circle which extends beyond the planting hole. Mulch should not touch trunk above root flair.
7. Only dead, damaged or poorly located branches will be removed using proper pruning techniques.
8. All bare root trees (and balled and burlapped trees in exposed, windy areas) will be staked or guyed to keep them upright. Use commonly accepted staking techniques. Stakes will be removed approximately one year after planting.
9. Newly planted trees will be watered at the time of planting, and for best results, water, soaking the root zone once per week, barring rain, and more frequently during hot weather until they are established.
10. In caring for and handling trees prior to planting, all precautions customary in good trade practice will be taken.
11. A minimum one-year warranty is recommended.

## Five Year Tree Maintenance

1. A detailed, written tree maintenance plan must be developed, including the following components:
  1. Grantee will need to inspect the trees every six months to evaluate general health, disease and insect problems.
  2. Grantee will need to treat disease and insect problems as needed to maintain good tree health.
  3. Grantee will need to water during the growing season as needed.
  4. Grantees will prune the trees as needed to remove dead, damaged or poorly located limbs using accepted practices of the industry.
  5. Grantees will remove planting stakes and guy wires within the first year.

## Other sources for Tree Planting Specifications and information

- Trees are Good from ISA (<http://www.treesaregood.org/>).
- Urban Horticulture Institute from Cornell University (<https://blogs.cornell.edu/urbanhort/>)
- Positively the Pits! Successfully strategies for sustainable streetscapes from University of Massachusetts (<http://www.umass.edu/urbantree/publications/pits.pdf>), November 2003 issue of TCI 7/1/04