



Suggested Tree Planting Guidelines

Updated Spring 2020

Trees build community and help us connect to the places where we live, work and play. In light of COVID-19 and the impact it has had on all of us, Trees Forever is dedicated to supporting our communities and continuing to make connections through tree plantings. Together we are on a mission to plant and care for trees and the environment by empowering people, building community and promoting stewardship.

We know that previous methods of planting trees – volunteer-based events where groups of all sizes come out to plant together – will need to be reconsidered. With a little ingenuity and proactive planning, responsible and safe planting events can still take place. Below are our recommendations to communities and tree committees.

Ask yourself these questions before proceeding

- Can my tree planting event be postponed to a later time?
 - Can you wait a growing season or two before planting? If so, consider this option. Additional information may become available that will inform your planting decisions. If you have a grant from Trees Forever or another source, stay in contact about your plans and ask about a grant extension.
- How important is it to have a community-building event for my planting? Can city-staff or a very small group of local committee members plant?
 - We always encourage volunteer-focused events because it builds a community culture that values trees. However, with COVID-19, that may not be able to happen this year and that's okay. Could a very limited number of people or your local city staff plant instead? Sometimes we are able to create a team approach by grouping families and households together (more on that later.)
- If we proceed with a community-based planting event, can we keep up social/physical distancing requirements, mask wearing, and proper cleaning protocols?
 - We're all thinking about these things a lot these days. Spend a little extra time thinking through how you can accomplish these health-related requirements for your specific project before proceeding. And, good news! Trees are always planted at proper distances of 20-30 feet apart.

Do these best practices for all planting scenarios listed below

- Encourage anyone who has been sick in the past two weeks, shows any symptoms, or has been in direct contact with someone infected to refrain from participating in person.
- Discourage handshaking, high fives, and other closer interactions.
- Encourage the use of face masks
- Provide places to wash hands or provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Maintain proper six-foot distance between people who have not already been distancing together.

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City staff or very limited, small group planting

- Prioritize a few key spots that you can accomplish or that are a top priority. Potentially save some trees to be planted at a later time.
- After planting, immediately put a good layer of mulch (2-4" layer to the edge of the branches) around the base of the tree and place trunk protection (corrugated tube or tile). Stake tree only if necessary (if the tree does not stand on its own or there was a small root ball to start).
- Make a plan to water trees throughout the summer. Mulch will help maintain soil moisture.

Residents plant trees, if planting along a street

- Promote street tree planting as a fun, stay-at-home activity that can be done in a social distancing unit (people who have been isolating together i.e. family, partners, roommates).
- Residents/social distancing units plant as many trees as will fit in front of their house, as determined by a site analysis. With white spray paint, mark exactly where trees should be planted – we find it best to draw a large circle where people should dig.
- City staff or local tree committee drops off tree and necessary materials (mulch, trunk protection, etc.) to homeowner's residence.
- Prior to planting, share a [tree planting video](#) or provide tree planting instructions.
- Resident is responsible for planting the tree and ongoing care (watering, mulching).
- City staff or local tree committee verifies tree was planted in correct location and planted properly.

Social distancing tree plantings planted by people in social distancing units

- Open up tree planting events to a large community, but only allow trees to be planted in social distancing units (people who have been isolating together i.e. family, partners, roommates).
- Consider holding the planting event over a multi-day timeline, with people signing up for staggered shifts and specific tree locations to ensure planting groups are not arriving at the same time and distance requirements are maintained between groups.
- Consider asking your volunteers how many people are in their social distancing unit and how many trees they can/want to plant to gauge how many trees can be planted in each shift.
- Ask volunteers to bring their own tools (shovels, box cutter or saw to cut roots, garden fork to remove soil to find root flare). If volunteers do not have their own tools, provide pre-sanitized tools. Ask volunteers to wear gloves. Sanitize tools after use.
- To ensure proper planting, share a [tree planting video](#) or provide tree planting instructions. Consider providing a tree planting tip sheet the day of the planting.

Keep it fun!

- Institute a tree cheer or chant that people can cheer to each other during plantings.
- Create "I planted a tree today" stickers
- Create signs that can be put at the planting sites. Signs might say, "Hi! I'm new to the neighborhood" or "Tree planters at work". Be creative!
- Encourage people to share pictures of the planting on social media (tag @Trees Forever so we can share in the fun!)
- Use Trees Forever "I planted a tree today" filter on Facebook.