

Trees and Tree Care, Adopted April 15, 1971

These regulations are intended to serve as a guide for arboricultural activities on public street right-of-way and otherwise defines required practices and treatments pertaining to same within the City and County of Denver, Colorado.

Any failure to comply with these regulations will be considered subject to prosecution or serve as a basis for a hearing conducted by the Manager of Parks and Recreation or both.

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SECTION I – Planting and Maintenance of Tree and Plant Growth on Public Right-of-Way areas by Abutting Properties

1. Plantings made on such areas are a privilege allowed by the City to the owners of the abutting property with the provision that the property owner or owners, thereafter will be responsible for acceptable maintenance and removal of such growth in accordance with municipal ordinance and regulation.
2. Trees, or any other plant growth when permitted to grow upon public streets, or public right-of-way, shall be kept and maintained in such a manner as not to endanger, interfere, or otherwise conflict with requirements of safe public use thereon.
3. Any time that such plants or trees established under this privilege interfere with or jeopardize necessary public passage on public rights-of-way, or obstruct any improvements made thereon for public benefit, the owner of abutting property enjoying such privilege may be ordered to modify or eliminate such growth.
4. The City and County of Denver, Colorado, reserves the right at all times to do emergency trimming, removing, or otherwise treating any such trees or other plant growth, as may be deemed necessary in the public interest.

SECTION II – Specific Requirements Pertaining to Tree Trimming Activities upon Tree Growing in Denver's Public Street Rights-of-Way

1. No tree shall be cut back in such a manner that its health or eventual safety will be impaired – except in the process of tree removal or emergency relief of an immediate danger to persons or property. Any such emergency procedures must be reported promptly to the City Forester with plans for completion or follow-up work submitted for approval.
2. Permit authority to trim street trees does not authorize the cutting back of sound, healthy tree limbs in excess of 6 inches in diameter (outside bark) unless specifically described and written into the permit form by the City Forester or the Manager of Parks and Recreation.
3. When tree trimming cuts are made to a side limb, such remaining limb must possess a basal thickness of at least 1/3 of the diameter of the wound so effected. Such cuts shall be considered proper only when such remaining limb is vigorous enough to maintain adequate foliage to produce woody growth capable of healing the trimming cut so effected within a reasonable period of time.
4. All final tree trimming cuts shall be made in such a manner as to favor the earliest possible covering of the wound by natural callus growth. Excessively deep flush cuts which produce large wounds or weaken the tree at the cut shall not be made.
5. Tree limbs shall be removed and controlled in such a manner as to cause no damage to other parts of the tree, or to other plants or property.
6. All tools used on a tree, known to contain an infectuous tree disease shall be properly disinfected immediately after completing work in such a tree.
7. Hard maples, birches, and walnut trees shall usually be trimmed when in leaf, except where conditions hazardous to the public or property are involved. If such trees are trimmed during dormant periods, property owners shall be informed of bleeding potential from cutting wounds.
8. All cutting tools and saws used in making tree trimming cuts shall be kept sharpened adequately to result in final cuts with an unabraded wood surface and secure bark remaining adjacent thereto.
9. Whenever trimming cuts are to be made while removing limbs too large to hold securely in one hand during the cutting operation, the limbs shall be cut off first, one to two feet beyond the intended final cut. Then the final cut shall be made in a manner to prevent unnecessary tearing back of the bark and wood.
10. Any cutting of tree roots, other than when in the process of tree removal, shall give due consideration to the future welfare and safety of the trees. Proper action shall be taken to treat resulting wounds to prevent entry of decay organisms.

SECTION III – Authorized Types of Tree Trimming Applicable to Trees Growing Within Denver Public Street Rights-of-Way

1. “Complete” Trim

A. Description of “complete” trim: This operation of tree trimming shall consist of the total removal of those dead or living branches as may menace the future health, strength and attractiveness of the tree.

B. Specifications for “complete” trim:

- (1) Properly remove all dead and dying branches of ¼ inch and over in diameter.
- (2) Remove all broken branches or any loose branches lodged in the tree.
- (3) Remove all dead and live stubs of previously broken or poorly cut limbs.
- (4) Remove any live branches which interfere with the tree's structural strength and healthful development, which will include the following:
 - (i) Limbs which rub and abrade a more important branch;
 - (ii) Limbs of weak structure which are not important to the framework of the tree;
 - (iii) Limbs which if allowed to grow would wedge apart the junction of more important branches;
 - (iv) Limbs with twigs and foliage obstructing the development of more important branches;
 - (v) Limbs forming multiple leaders in a single leader type tree;
 - (vi) Branches near the end of a limb which will produce more weight or offer more resistance to wind than the limb is likely to support;
 - (vii) Undesirable sucker and sprout growths;
 - (viii) Selective removal to one or more developing leaders where multiple branch growth exists near the end of broken or stubbed limbs;
 - (ix) Removal of branches which project too far outward beyond an otherwise symmetrical form;
 - (x) Removal or severance of any exposed roots which serve to restrict or act in a girdling manner and prevent proper expansion and growth of other major roots, or restrict the base of the tree trunk.

C. All final cuts shall be made flush to the remaining branch, limb or trunk of the tree. Extremely deep cuts which produce excessively wide wounds, or weaken the tree shall not be made.

2. “Minimum” or “Safety” Trim

A. Description of “Minimum” or “Safety” Trim: This operation of tree trimming shall consist of the minimum performance necessary to correct one or more extreme and undesirable conditions existent within a tree which may be hazardous to persons or property.

B. Specifications for “Minimum” or “Safety” Trim:

- (1) Remove all dead and dying branches of 2 inches or more in diameter.
- (2) Remove all broken or loose branches 2 inches or more in diameter.
- (3) Reduce the length of limbs which extend extremely beyond the perimeter of an otherwise symmetrical form.
- (4) Cut back ends of branches and reduce weight where excessive overburden appears likely to result in breakage of supporting limbs. Such cutting back shall not include the removal of any live, healthy limbs in excess of 6 inches in diameter unless a specific consent is given by the City Forester.

3. “Head Back” Trim:

A. Description of “Head Back” trim: This operation shall consist of reducing the height and/or spread of a tree by not more than 1/3 and shall only be applied to trees when such work is necessary to control extended growth which may endanger overhead utility lines or interfere with adjacent structures.

B. Specifications for “Head Back” Trim:

- (1) This form of trimming trees shall be done by means of a method called “drop crotching” which serves to shorten branch structure and thereby limits the extent of the foliage canopy to a natural appearing margin. This action consists of removing perimeter branches at their lower junction with shorter branch structure and thereby limits the extent of the foliage canopy to a natural appearing margin. This action consists of removing perimeter branches at their lower junction with shorter side branches.
- (2) No cuts on living branches shall be made in excess of 6 inches in diameter without written permission from the Office of the City Forester.
- (3) Extended perimeter branches shall be properly cut at their junction with lower branches having a basal diameter of at least 1/3 of the diameter of the cut so effected.
- (4) The remaining lower branches so cut back to, shall be retained intact to form a reduced foliage perimeter at a specific height and/or spread.
- (5) This technique of tree trimming shall only be applied when larger growing trees endanger overhead utility lines, or where excessive growth of trees interferes with adjacent structures, or otherwise creates a specific hazard to persons or property.
- (6) “Head-back” trim should not be attempted or used if the metabolism of a tree would be seriously unbalanced by the use of this technique, or where the structure of the tree would be weakened by such action. Irreparable trees shall be removed rather than be worked on with this mode of tree trimming.

4. “Spot” Trim:

A. Description of “Spot” Trim: This operation of tree trimming shall consist of the removal of one or more branches localized in a particular area of the crown of a tree.

B. Specifications for “Spot” Trim:

- (1) Street trees shall be trimmed in such a manner as to prevent branch and foliage interference with requirements of safe public passage. Overstreet clearance shall be kept to a minimum of 13 feet 6 inches above the paved surface of the street, and 8 feet over the surface of the public sidewalk or pedestrian way.
- (2) Trunks of trees shall be clear of growth to a minimum height of 8 feet above the ground level. Exceptions are allowed for young trees which would be irreparably damaged by such trimming action.

(3) Individual or scattered dead or broken limbs shall be properly removed without the necessity of performing other work not immediately urgent for protection of the public or property, or the health of the tree.

SECTION IV – Regulations Pertaining to Species of Trees or Plants to be Planted

1. The following species of trees are hereby authorized for planting upon public street right-of-ways within permit jurisdiction. (Tree species other than those included herein must be specifically authorized for street tree planting by the Manager of Parks and Recreation.)

A. Trees capable of eventually attaining a height of forty (40) feet above the ground at maturity:

- (1) *Acer platanoides* – Norway Maple
- (2) *Aesculus octandra* – Yellow Buckeye
- (3) *Catalpa speciosa* – Western Catalpa
- (4) *Celtis occidentalis* – Common Hackberry
- (5) *Fraxinus pennsylvanica lanceolata* – Green Ash
- (6) *Gleditsia triacanthos inermis* – Thornless Honeylocust
- (7) *Quercus borealis* – Red Oak
- (8) *Quercus macrocarpa* – Bur Oak
- (9) *Quercus robur* – English Oak
- (10) *Tilia americana* – American Linden
- (11) *Tilia europa* – European Linden
- (12) *Gymnocladus dioica* – Kentucky Coffee Tree

B. Trees of smaller mature sizes qualified for planting upon public street areas:

- (1) *Aesculus glabra* – Ohio Buckeye
- (2) *Catalpa ovata* – Chinese Catalpa
- (3) *Crataegus mollis* – Downy Hawthorn
- (4) *Crataegus phaenopyrum* – Washington Hawthorn
- (5) *Malus sp.* – Flowering crabapples
- (6) *Sorbus aucuparia* – European Mountain Ash
- (7) *Tilia cordata* – Littleleaf Linden

2. Unless otherwise specifically authorized by the Manager of Parks and Recreation, the following species and types of trees and woody plants shall not be planted upon public street rights-of-way within Denver:

- (1) Any of the poplar species (*Populus sp.*)
- (2) Any of the willow species (*Salix sp.*)
- (3) The box elder tree (*Acer negundo*)
- (4) The Siberian (Chinese) elm (*Ulmus pumila*)
- (5) Any weeping or pendulous type tree
- (6) Any tree with bushy growth habit which cannot be maintained to a single leader or trunk.
- (7) Any shrub or hedge growth which by its habit of growth would obstruct, restrict, or conflict with necessary and safe use of the public rights-of-way.

SECTION V – Regulations Pertaining to Spacing of Trees

1. Unless otherwise authorized by the manager of Parks and Recreation, all newly planted street trees shall be planted midway between the sidewalk and the curb at least 20 feet back from the projected property line at a street intersection. Trees which attain large size at maturity shall be spaced at least 40 feet apart so as to allow for safe, healthy, and attractive growth. Smaller types of trees, when designated as such by the City Forester, may be spaced to a minimum of 25 feet apart.

2. No tree will be planted closer than 5 feet to any driveway or alley, nor shall it be planted in such a manner that eventual growth cannot be reasonably controlled so as to avert interference with, or obstruction to any improvements installed for public benefit such as traffic and street signs and lights, fire hydrants, overhead utility wires, street lights, utility poles, etc.

3. At edges of streets where a space of less than 5 feet in width exists between the curb and the abutting private property line – no trees or woody plants shall be planted on the public area so involved.

4. Where the combination sidewalk-curb and gutter have been installed no tree plantings are to be made closer than 5 feet from the edge of any concrete installation.