





# A Note from the City Forester

## Frequently Asked Questions



Street Trees

Yard Trees

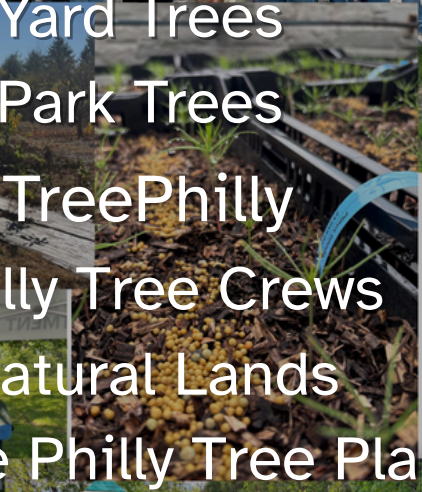
Park Trees

TreePhilly

Philly Tree Crews

Natural Lands

The Philly Tree Plan



# A note from the City Forester



*As Philadelphia's City Forester, I'm proud to present this guide, a resource for every resident who sees the value of a greener, healthier, and more resilient city. Our trees are not just a part of our landscape; they cool our streets, clean our air, manage stormwater, support wildlife, and offer quiet places for rest and reflection. But more than that, they bring us together.*

*Every tree in Philadelphia is a living piece of our city's story. Some have stood for generations in our parks and along our streets, planted in memory, celebration, or hope. Others are newly rooted, placed in the ground by neighbors, volunteers, or students learning to care for their environment. Together, these trees form our urban forest.*

*The Philly Tree Plan, our city's first-ever comprehensive urban forest plan, was built with input from thousands of residents in every zip code. It's not just a plan about trees, it's a plan about people. About creating equity in tree canopy coverage, empowering neighborhoods with tools and resources, and making sure that every Philadelphian, no matter where they live, can experience the benefits of a healthy tree canopy.*

*This guide reflects the spirit of that plan. Here you'll find answers to your questions, connections to support programs like TreePhilly, and information about the many City agencies and non-profit organizations that work together to plant and care for our city's trees. But more importantly, I hope you'll find inspiration. The future of our urban forest depends on Philadelphia residents and the efforts of everyday people like you who believe in the power of trees. The future we want for Philadelphia's urban forest is one of abundance, justice, shared responsibility, and beauty. Together, we can grow a city where every resident feels the shade, strength, and shelter of trees. Thank you for being a part of this effort. Let's keep growing together.*

*warmly,*

*-Erica Smith Fichman*  
City Forester  
Philadelphia Parks and Recreation



# Philadelphia Street Trees

## Frequently Asked Questions

*Philadelphia's street trees are a vital part of the city's urban landscape, providing essential environmental, economic, and social benefits to neighborhoods across the city. These trees not only beautify streets and public spaces but also help manage stormwater, improve air quality, and cool the surrounding air. As Philadelphia continues to grow and face the challenges of climate change, maintaining and expanding its street tree population is crucial for creating a healthier, more sustainable, and more vibrant community for generations to come.*

### **Q: How can I get a street tree planted in front of my house?**

**A:** The City of Philadelphia Parks & Recreation will plant a street tree for free in front of your house! The City will send a qualified inspector to check for above and below ground utilities, ADA compliance, and safety concerns. If approved, The City and its contractors will cut a hole in the pavement between the sidewalk and the street, and select an appropriate tree for the location. (Scan the QR code to request a Street tree)



### **Street Tree**

*A Tree planted between the sidewalk and the street*



**Request a  
Street Tree**



**Request  
Street Tree  
Maintenance**



**Q: Once I have my street tree, what's the best way to care for it?**

**A:** Once planted, the homeowner or tenant should then water the tree 10-20 gallons of water per week for the first two years. You should keep the tree pit free of trash and debris and covered in a thin layer of mulch. *(Free at the Organic Recycling Center in West Fairmount Park)* Then, enjoy the beauty and benefits of your new street tree!

**Q: I think the street tree in front of my house needs some attention. How can I have my tree (street) taken care of?**

**A:** Once established, The City of Philadelphia is entrusted with the care of the street tree, which includes pruning. To request maintenance on your street tree, scan the QR and submit the form. The home-owner has the option of hiring and paying for an arborist to prune or maintain the street tree, but must choose from a list of contractors qualified by The City to work on street trees. The list of qualified contractors who can receive a permit to work on street trees is available by request from the Philly Parks & Rec Street Tree office: [streettrees.info@phila.gov](mailto:streettrees.info@phila.gov)

**Q: A street tree is dead, and I am concerned it will become a hazard.**

**A:** If you believe a street tree is dead, please make a Street Tree Maintenance Request using the QR Code on the previous page.

**Q: A street tree fell during a storm and is blocking a road, or it has fallen on a house, car, or other property. What do I do?**

**A:** This is considered an emergency, and you should call 911 immediately.

**Q: A street tree has fallen on or has damaged electrical wires. What do I do?**

**A:** You should call PECO emergency line at 1(800) 841-4141 if a tree has fallen on or is damaging electrical wires

**Q: How can I volunteer to help plant street trees in my neighborhood?**

**A:** You can join the hundreds of trained volunteers planting trees along the street here in Philly every Spring and Fall by becoming a certified Tree Tender with The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. ([PHSONline.org](http://PHSONline.org))

Trained volunteers join groups of neighbors to plant trees in pre-approved locations around their community. Check out the link listed in our resources on the

# Philadelphia Yard Trees

## Frequently Asked Questions

*Increasing the tree canopy of our great city requires more than just caring for our street trees; it also depends on the trees we plant in our own yards and community spaces. By planting beautiful, resilient trees on private properties and in residential neighborhoods, we contribute directly to the overall health, beauty, and sustainability of our urban environment. Yard trees not only enhance the visual appeal of our communities, but they also provide vital environmental benefits – offering shade, reducing air pollution, and helping to manage stormwater runoff. Each tree planted in a yard helps to strengthen The City’s green infrastructure and improve the quality of life for all Philadelphians.*

**Q: How can I get a tree to plant in my front or back yard, church yard, community garden or other private property?**

**A:** The TreePhilly program of Philadelphia Parks & Recreation distributes free trees for people to plant on private property. These "yard tree giveaway events" take place in neighborhoods throughout The City every Spring and Fall. Visit [TreePhilly.org](http://TreePhilly.org) to learn more and sign up for the newsletter to find out where and how you can get a free shade tree, smaller flowering tree or fruit tree to plant in your yard or community space.



**Yard Tree**  
A Tree planted in a yard or on private property

**Plant a Tree in your yard**



**Sign-up for TreePhilly  
Newsletter to find out about  
our spring and fall distribution  
events**



**Q: Trees make a mess and attract insects and wildlife. Why would I plant one?**

**A:** It's true that you may have a few extra chores per year because you've welcomed a tree into your yard or on your street, but we believe the benefits are worth it. Trees provide shade and relief from the extreme heat of the summer and lower our electric bills. Neighborhoods with more trees have decreased rates of asthma and crime. Trees help people concentrate better, improve mental and social health. Providing homes to birds and insects that create a whole, healthy urban ecosystem. All while adding beauty to our urban landscape.

**Q: I'm afraid a tree will mess up my pipes, but I still want to plant a tree near my house. What should I do?**

**A:** Trees are attracted to water, so if there is a leaky pipe, roots may grow toward or become entangled in a pipe. Tree roots cannot drill through pipes, but they may seek out already cracked pipes. Philadelphia is an old city, with aging infrastructure, so it's a good idea to purchase pipe insurance. American Water Resources provides insurance that covers any damage to pipes outside of your home.

**Q: I have a tree in my yard that needs attention. What do I do?**

**A:** TreePhilly and Philadelphia Parks & Recreation do not prune or remove trees on private property, including alleys. Property owners are responsible for their yard trees. If you are a property owner looking for an arborist, check out the International Society of Arboriculture ([treesaregood.org](http://treesaregood.org))

**Q: I've heard trees can grow into the foundation of a home. Why would I plant one near my house?**

**A:** The trees selected for planting as "street trees" and "yard trees" by professionals at The City are not likely to negatively affect your home, unless they're too big for the space or planted too close to the building. There are however, many "invasive trees" including trees that are not native to Philadelphia that grow aggressively. For example, Ailanthus Trees or Paulownia Trees tend to grow close to or even through brick and stone structures. These are the trees you'll see growing through cracks in the sidewalk or even out of the walls of abandoned buildings. You should quickly remove these trees, including as much as the underground roots as possible. For more information on invasives visit [bit.ly/PhillyInvasives](http://bit.ly/PhillyInvasives)

***Find out more about our Yard Tree Program in the TreePhilly section of this booklet.***

# Park Trees

## Frequently Asked Questions

*Philly Parks are living landmarks that offer peaceful, shaded spaces for recreation, reflection, and connection to nature for residents of all ages. Beyond their natural beauty, these green spaces serve as vital gathering places for community events, family picnics, and quiet walks, fostering a sense of belonging and improving the overall quality of urban life. The trees and open landscapes not only provide respite from The City's bustle but also contribute to cleaner air, cooler temperatures, and a healthier, more vibrant environment for generations to come.*

**Q: Who plants new park trees?**

**A:** New park trees are planted by partner organizations and community volunteers, including Park Friends groups. Programs like TreePhilly and PHS Tree Tenders and the Natural Lands team also contribute to planting efforts in public parks.

**Q: How are park trees cared for and maintained?**

**A:** Park trees are maintained by The City's Tree Crews and Parks & Recreation staff. Maintenance includes watering, mulching, pruning, removing dead branches, and protecting young trees from damage. Larger maintenance projects may involve contracted certified arborists.



**Report a park concern to 311**



**Find your local park friends group**



**Q: Who do I report a problem with a park tree to?**

**A:** For hazardous or damaged park trees, contact The City by calling 311, using the Philly 311 mobile app, or submitting a request online at [phila.gov/311](http://phila.gov/311).

**Q: Are there volunteer opportunities for park cleanups ?**

**A:** Yes! Many parks have Friends of the Park groups that organize cleanups, planting days, and tree care events. Volunteer opportunities are also available through Parks & Recreation, TreePhilly, and the PHS Tree Tenders program.

**Q: How can I help plant trees or take care of my neighborhood park?**

**A:** Residents can help by watering young trees during dry periods, keeping mulch rings tidy, removing litter from tree bases, and reporting any signs of disease or damage through 311. You can also join volunteer groups or community cleanups that focus on park stewardship.

**Q: Can community members request tree plantings in specific parks?**

**A:** Yes. Residents can work with Park Friends groups, contact Parks & Recreation directly, or submit planting requests through programs like TreePhilly. Final approval depends on available resources, site suitability, and long-term maintenance capacity.

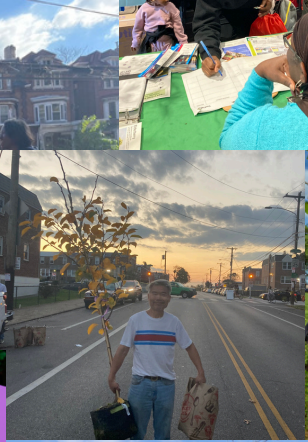
**Q: What can we do about illegal dumping?**

**A:** Illegal dumping should be reported immediately to 311 or to the Philadelphia Streets Department. Community members can also join or organize park cleanups, which help deter future dumping and keep the park inviting.

**Q: What are the benefits of increasing the tree canopy in city parks?**

**A:** More trees in parks mean cooler temperatures during summer, improved air quality, reduced stormwater runoff, increased wildlife habitat, and more inviting spaces for recreation and relaxation.







# TreePhilly

## Frequently Asked Questions

*TreePhilly is The City of Philadelphia's community forestry program dedicated to supporting Philadelphia residents with tree care education and resources. Whether you're looking to plant street trees in your neighborhood or receive a free yard tree for your home, TreePhilly is here to help. It's where we connect with our community, roll up our sleeves, and get our hands dirty for a greener, healthier city.*

### **Q: How can I get a free tree from TreePhilly?**

**A:** TreePhilly hosts seasonal tree giveaways where residents can register to receive a free tree for their yard or garden. Visit [treephilly.org](http://treephilly.org) to check upcoming giveaway dates and eligibility.

### **Q: What types of trees are available through TreePhilly giveaways?**

**A:** Each season, TreePhilly offers a variety of native and climate resilient trees selected for Philadelphia's urban environment. Available species vary by event, but typically include shade trees, flowering trees, and other small-space options.

### **Q: Why does TreePhilly focus on yard trees?**

**A:** Through research, TreePhilly has learned that private properties will play a critical role in growing Philly's tree canopy. Front yards, backyards, churchyards, schools, and community gardens are spaces we can fill to bridge the gap and create a more balanced and resilient canopy across our neighborhoods.

### **Q: What kind of resources are available from TreePhilly?**

**A:** TreePhilly provides residents, community groups, and organizations with the tools and support needed to plant and care for trees across Philadelphia. Their resources include yard tree giveaway programs, community tree programs that support nonprofits, schools, and community groups in hosting their own tree giveaways. Additionally, community forestry partnerships, educational tools, tree care tips, and other valuable resources.

### **Q: If I want to green my neighborhood, can I collaborate with TreePhilly?**

**A:** Yes! TreePhilly will work directly with residents, community groups, and neighborhood leaders to bring more green space to our communities. Yard Tree Programs, street tree requests, outreach and education are just a few ways you can collaborate with TreePhilly!

### **Q: Can I request a tree for a community space or business property?**

**A:** Yes, TreePhilly provides free trees to community groups, nonprofits, schools, and faith-based organizations. These trees can be planted in courtyards, playgrounds, gardens and other privately managed spaces that benefit the broader community.



**Q: I'm hosting a community event. Can TreePhilly come and talk about resources?**

**A:** Yes – TreePhilly staff would love to bring resources and table at your event. Please email us: [Info@Treephilly.org](mailto:Info@Treephilly.org) to tell us the details of your event and we will do our best to be in attendance and or provide resources about Philadelphia's urban forest.

**Q: I'm worried about planting a tree too close to my home or pipes. Can TreePhilly help me choose the right spot?**

**A:** Yes – TreePhilly staff and tree care guides offer advice on safe planting distances from homes, sidewalks, and utilities to avoid future issues

**Q: Can I plant a tree from TreePhilly in the sidewalk in front of my house?**

**A:** No – trees from TreePhilly's Yard Tree Program are for planting on private property only, such as front yards, backyards, gardens, or community spaces. They are not for sidewalks, tree pits, or other public rights-of-way.

If you'd like a tree planted in the sidewalk space in front of your home, you can submit a request through the Street Tree Planting Program managed by Philadelphia Parks & Recreation. Trained staff will inspect the site to ensure it's safe for planting, then schedule the tree installation at no cost to you.



Yard Trees



Street Trees

**Have more questions for TreePhilly?  
Contact us at [Info@treephilly.org](mailto:Info@treephilly.org)**



# Philly Tree Crews

## Frequently Asked Questions

*Philadelphia's dedicated Tree Crews work year-round to care for the city's public trees, keeping our streets, parks, and public spaces safe, healthy, and beautiful. Here's what residents should know about the work they do and how to connect with them.*

### **Q: What do the Tree Crews of Philly do?**

**A:** The City of Philadelphia Tree Crews are responsible for planting, pruning, maintaining, and removing public trees in Philadelphia. This includes street trees, park trees, and trees in public rights-of-way.

### **Q: How can I request tree services from the city's Tree Crews?**

**A:** Residents can request tree services through the city's 311 system. You can submit a request online at [phila.gov/311](http://phila.gov/311), use the Philly 311 mobile app, or call 311 directly to report a problem or request services like pruning, inspection, or removal. Please keep in mind our crews do not provide services on private property.

### **Q: Who is responsible for caring for street trees in front of my house?**

**A:** The City of Philadelphia manages the planting, removal, and major maintenance of street trees. However, property owners are encouraged to help with basic care such as watering, mulching, and monitoring the health of the tree.

### **Q: How long does it take for a tree service request to be handled?**

**A:** Response times vary depending on the type of request, weather conditions, and the current workload of Tree Crews. Emergency situations, such as fallen trees or branches posing immediate hazards, are prioritized.

### **Q: How do I report a dead, damaged, or hazardous tree?**

- You can report tree issues to the city by calling 311
- Submitting a service request through the Philly 311 mobile app
- Using the 311 website to select the appropriate service category under "Trees and Green Spaces"

### **Q: Can residents help care for public trees?**

**A:** Yes! While the city handles major maintenance, residents are encouraged to water young street trees, apply mulch, and remove trash or debris from around the tree pit. You can also get involved with programs like Tree Tenders to learn more about tree care.

### **Q: Can I request the removal of the alley tree behind my home?**

**A:** Tree Crews are responsible for trees that are planted in the public right-of-way (street trees) and in city parks and recreation spaces. Trees located in alleys, on private property, or outside of city-managed land are the responsibility of the property owner.

# Natural Lands

## Frequently Asked Questions

*Philadelphia Parks & Recreation's Natural Lands Team cares for more than 5,000 acres of woodlands, wetlands, meadows, and streams across the city. Their mission is to protect and restore these vital ecosystems by planting native species, controlling invasive plants, improving wildlife habitat, and managing stormwater. Through restoration and conservation, the team helps ensure that Philadelphia's natural areas remain healthy, resilient, and accessible for everyone to enjoy.*

**Q: What does the Natural Lands team do and where do they work?**

**A:** The team manages and restores Philadelphia's natural areas, including forests, streams, meadows, wetlands, and other ecologically sensitive habitats. Their work includes invasive plant control, native plant restoration, erosion control, wildlife habitat improvement, and ecosystem management across Philadelphia's park system, including areas in Fairmount Park, Pennypack Park, Wissahickon Valley Park, and many neighborhood green spaces.

**Q: How does the team protect natural habitats?**

**A:** The team uses ecological best practices like planting native trees and wildflowers, controlling invasive species, stabilizing stream banks, and improving soil and water health. They also monitor wildlife and promote biodiversity.

**Q: Why is invasive plant removal important?**

**A:** Invasive plants compete with native vegetation, reducing biodiversity and harming wildlife habitat. Removing them allows native species to thrive, strengthening the ecosystem and making it more resilient to climate change.

**Q: Can the public help care for natural lands?**

**A:** Yes! Volunteers are essential. You can join habitat restoration projects, stream cleanups, meadow plantings, and seasonal invasive plant removals. Many events are family-friendly and provide tools and training. Learn more about volunteer opportunities at [loveyourpark.org](http://loveyourpark.org).

**Q: How do I report an issue in a natural area?**

**A:** For hazards (like fallen trees blocking trails), large-scale dumping, or damaged habitat, call 311, use the Philly 311 mobile app, or contact Parks & Recreation directly. For urgent environmental hazards, notify the Natural Lands Team through their webpage on [phila.gov](http://phila.gov).



# The Philly Tree Plan

## Frequently Asked Questions

*The Philly Tree Plan is a 10-year strategic plan developed by Philadelphia Parks & Recreation in partnership with residents, community organizations, and city departments. It lays out a citywide vision for a healthier, more equitable urban forest, with specific goals for planting, maintaining, and protecting trees across Philadelphia.*

### **Q: Why was the Tree Plan created?**

**A:** The plan was developed in response to growing concerns about climate change, extreme heat, and inequitable access to tree canopy. Some neighborhoods have very few trees, while others have lush shade. The Philly Tree Plan aims to close that gap and ensure every resident has access to the health and environmental benefits that trees provide.

### **Q: How was the public involved in shaping the plan?**

**A:** Thousands of residents contributed through surveys, community meetings, listening sessions, and pop-up events. Feedback was gathered across all zip codes to ensure the plan reflects the voices and needs of all Philadelphians — especially those in historically underserved areas.

### **Q: Is the plan already being implemented?**

**A.** Yes, The City and other organizational stakeholders have already begun implementing recommendations from the Philly Tree Plan.

### **Q: How does the plan address environmental justice?**

**A:** The Philly Tree Plan prioritizes neighborhoods that have experienced historic disinvestment, fewer trees, and greater exposure to heat and air pollution. It focuses on addressing disparities in access to tree canopy and includes recommendations to protect vulnerable communities from future climate impacts.

### **Q: What are the main goals of The Plan?**

- Expanding tree canopy across the city, especially in under-canopied neighborhoods
- Ensuring equitable investment in tree planting and care
- Improving coordination among city departments and community groups
- Supporting job creation in green industries
- Encouraging community stewardship and education
- Enhancing maintenance and protection of existing trees

### **Q: How can I get involved with the Philly Tree Plan?**

- Request a free street tree or yard tree
- Volunteer with Tree Philly or a neighborhood greening initiative
- Share the plan with your community and encourage others to get involved
- Visit [www.phila.gov/programs/philly-tree-plan](http://www.phila.gov/programs/philly-tree-plan) to read the full plan and stay up to date on implementation progress

# Resources and Links



**Philadelphia Reforestation Hub**



**Fairmount Park Organic Recycling Center**



**Penn State Extension**



**US Forest Service**



**Philadelphia Orchard Project (POP)**



**Pennsylvania Horticultural Society  
Tree Tenders (PHS)**

