



Agreement to Plant a Park/Street Tree on Baltimore City Recreation and Parks land or in Baltimore City public right-of-way

By signing the Planting Request form you agree to the following terms:

- A BCRP Forestry representative will inspect your location and determine whether it is an appropriate site for a tree(s) to be planted.
- You may suggest a preferred tree species, but BCRP Forestry shall determine whether it is appropriate.
- You will adhere to the Planting and Protection Guidelines(attached)
- You will adhere to the Maintenance Guidelines(attached)
- You will notify BCRP Forestry if the tree appears to be dead or damaged.
- If you are not the adjacent property owner and are requesting to plant the tree on their behalf, you must give them the opportunity to opt-out using this online form. <https://www.treebaltimore.org/opt-out>
- If they do not have the opportunity to opt-out and the adjacent property owner rejects the planting within 30 days of the tree being installed, you will be responsible for removing the tree.

You understand that:

- Your request for a tree may be denied – not all sites are appropriate for tree planting.
- Trees in the right of way and on BCRP park land are the property of the City of Baltimore and pruning or removal of these trees must be authorized by the City.

For more information, email treebaltimore@baltimorecity.gov



Planting and Protection Guidelines

Nursery Stock Size

- Trees planted along streets, busy pedestrian thoroughfares, or adjacent to playgrounds must be at least 1 ½-inch caliper to ensure survival.
- Park trees must be at least ½-inch caliper unless otherwise approved by Forestry.

Handling and Transportation

- Care shall be taken to prevent damage to trunks, branches and roots with machinery or tools during transport.
- Transportation equipment shall be lined with felt/fabric material to protect the trunk and bark.
- Trees shall be handled by the root ball, not lifted by the trunk, to avoid damage.
- A protective tree tarp shall be used for transporting trees in vehicles to protect leaves and buds from wind damage.

Planting Container Stock

- Trees grown in a plastic pot often have circling or girdling roots. If not corrected, these roots may form a solid wall, causing the tree to become root-bound.
- Remove root ball from plastic container before planting. Partners shall take the time to rake out, prune or shave all circling roots to reduce defects and ensure outward growth.
- See guidelines continued in “Planting All Stock Types” below

Planting Balled & Burlapped Stock

- Trees grown in a field that are dug up by a large machine called a tree spade. Up to 90% of roots are severed. The root ball is then contained in a burlap sack with a wire cage around it. Require heavy machinery to move.
- At least the top 1/3 of the wire basket and burlap shall be removed. If possible, the entire cage can be removed, but extreme care must be taken to avoid breaking apart or damaging the root ball. It is better to leave some of the cage than damage fragile roots.
- See guidelines continued in “Planting All Stock Types” below



Planting Fabric/Grow Bag Stock

- Trees grown in fabric bag. Small absorbing roots grow through the bag and reach the air outside, the tips are desiccated which has an “air pruning” effect. When the bag is removed, the absorbing roots break off, leaving a healthy root structure and limiting girdling roots.
- The bag is not biodegradable and must be removed before placing root ball in the hole.
- See guidelines continued in “Planting All Stock Types” below

Planting Bare Root Stock

- Trees removed from soil during dormancy. Roots must remain cool and moist during transport and storage.
- Before planting, shake off an excess of any materials used to keep the roots moist.

Planting All Stock types

- In the Baltimore area, tree planting season occurs from September 15-May 15 as long as the ground is not frozen. Fall is preferable to spring because it allows the tree to become established before the hot summer months. It is not recommended to plant after May 15th or before September 15th due to increased temperatures.
- Young trees go into shock upon being transplanted, and any additional stress from hot weather and drought can cause long-term health issues. For best results, keep an eye on the weather and pick a day to plant when soil is moist but not soggy.
- Before placing tree in the hole, remove all string, ties and tags and bamboo poles from the trunk and branches. These can restrict growth.
- A properly planted tree shall have a visible root flare. The root flare is the area where the tree trunk meets the roots and flares out or grows wider. This flare may be more visible on some species than others.
- The topmost structural root should be just barely covered with soil. This is the first, substantial-sized anchoring root growing out of base of the trunk. Almost every root flare is likely buried too deep within the root ball and must be excavated before planting.



- It is better to plant 1” too high than 1” too low due to natural settling of soil over time. Correct planting depth is key to the long-term success.

Planting All Stock types cont...

- Hole shall be dug 2-3x as wide as the root ball.
- Hole shall have sloping sides and firm bottom so the root ball does not shift or settle and water does not collect underneath. The shape of the bottom of the hole should match the root ball.
- Be aware of glazing the sides of the hole in heavy clay soils or if using an auger. After digging, use the tip of the shovel to score the sides of the hole, allowing for better root penetration.
- If the hole is dug too deep, backfilled soil should be compacted to prevent settling of the root ball.
- While backfilling, routinely pause to lightly tamp down the original soil to eliminate large air pockets and stabilize the tree. Avoid stepping on or crushing the root ball.
- The practice of mudding-in is recommended when possible. Alternate backfilling and slow watering to provide a non-compacting action that condenses the freshly loosened soil. Let water and gravity do the work.
- Soil amendments and fertilizers are not recommended. If desired, organic compost may be added after backfilling is complete. Apply the compost as top dressing over the soil surface to imitate leaves decomposing in a forest. Do not mix it into the planting hole as this may discourage outward root growth and cause girdling roots underground.
- Planting soil shall be thoroughly saturated with water after the planting process to settle soil, eliminate air pockets and maintain moisture on the roots.

Tree Protection

- All trees planted in locations with deer presence shall be protected with approved materials. Locations include parks, green spaces, medians, or even street trees that are adjacent to open or wooded areas. Depending on the size and type of nursery stock, one of two protective methods shall be used:
 - For trees under 5-feet in height, or 1.5-inch caliper trunk, or those with low branching, three stakes shall be installed in an equilateral triangle with the tree at center. Trees shall be tied to only two of the three stakes (see below for tying). Metal welded utility fencing shall be installed around



these stakes and secured with poly-chain lock in 3 places along one of the stakes.

- For planting stock that is 2-inch caliper or greater, with lower limbs elevated 4-feet or more, a 4-foot tall, rigid-plastic mesh tube may be installed around the trunk of the tree in lieu of fencing. The tube shall be secured in 3 places with poly-chain lock. No pruning of live foliage shall be allowed at time of installation to accommodate this method.
- All trees planted in areas where grass or ground cover is present shall be protected from weed whackers and lawn mowers. Locations include parks, green spaces, medians, and street trees in grass pits. A minimum sixteen-inch (16”) tall hard-plastic mesh mower guard shall be installed around the base of the tree trunk to protect bark from mechanical damage.
- All protection materials for deer, mowers, and weed whackers shall be removed at the end of the two-year (2) maintenance period unless otherwise noted by TreeBaltimore.



Tree Maintenance Guidelines

After planting, ongoing maintenance over several years is key to long term success. Partners are responsible for routine care of new trees for two years after planting including watering, mulching, protection, and staking and tying.

After two years, tree maintenance becomes the responsibility of the Forestry Division. The adjacent resident or property owner is always responsible for upkeep of the tree pit including removal of trash and weeds.

- Stakes are required for all newly planted trees. Tree staking shall be completed the same day as planting. Install two 2x2 6-ft wooden stakes at least 10" into undisturbed soil outside of the root ball. Stakes shall be removed within 1 growing season unless tree is unstable or leaning (or unless deer are present, see below).
- Ties shall be made of flexible webbing or black plastic chain lock. One tie shall be used for each stake. Ties shall loop around the trunk and be tied to the stake. This allows for trunk growth. Ties shall not be knotted around the trunk of the tree. No metal tie shall be used.
- Mulch shall be applied at time of planting. Partners shall use undyed, organic materials with a thickness of 3-4-inches in a wide, shallow ring that extends to the edge of the canopy or drip line. Mulch shall remain at least 3-inches away from the base of the trunk. Partners shall maintain mulch for the duration of the 2-year maintenance period.
- Water trees weekly with 20-25 gallons during the growing season between May-September for at least two years after planting and bi-weekly for the remaining months of the growing season. Rain is only a substitute for watering if accumulation is 1" or greater.
- Water shall be directly applied at low pressure to each planting pit, allowing water to be absorbed into the planting soil until saturated, but without runoff.
- Use of slow-drip watering system is highly recommended, such as greenwell water savers, gator bags or tree diapers. Routine watering is the most important factor for tree survivability.
- Only Certified Baltimore TreeKeepers or ISA Arborists, (or residents or staff under the supervision of these approved persons), may prune city trees in the ROW or on BCRP parkland.



- Trees shall not be pruned within first two years after planting except for dead, diseased and broken limbs.
- 3-5 years after planting, young trees should be pruned for structure by a Certified TreeKeeper or Arborist.