



West Bridgewater Forestry and Parks Department

Tree Replacement Program for Residents

- In celebration of Arbor Day, the Forestry and Parks Department is pleased to announce a program that will help replenish our street trees. Street trees have been in decline due to disease, drought, insects, road salt, and electric utility trimming.
- We are offering residents an opportunity to have a new tree planted in their front yard.
- Using the "Right Tree for the Right Place" approach, we will ensure the best tree selection and tree location for new tree planting.
- Please submit your tree request to the Forestry and Parks Department. Residents meeting program criteria will be notified and provided guidelines for watering and general care of their tree. Every effort will be made to get new trees established to add to the beauty of our community.
- Funding is provided by grants from National Grid and the Town Beautification Fund.
- Tree memorials are available in memory of loved ones.
- See the "Setback Tree Plantings" information attached.
- Contact the Forestry and Parks Department at 508-894-1217 or ciannitelli@wbridgewater.com for more information.



SETBACK TREE PLANTINGS

One Tool for Improving Management of Your Urban and Community Forest

What is setback planting? Setback planting refers to the practice of planting public trees, for the common good, beyond the public right-of-way and on private property.

What laws govern setback planting, and are setback trees “public shade trees?”

Massachusetts General Law (M.G.L.) Chapter 87, Section 7, specifically allows towns and cities to plant trees within 20 feet of the public right-of-way, provided that written permission from the adjoining property owner is obtained first. M.G.L. Chapter 87, Section 1 states that trees planted under this provision are defined as “public shade trees” and thus protected by all sections of M.G.L. Chapter 87.

Why consider setback plantings?

The public right-of-way often contains various obstructions and hazards for trees. Limited soil volume, compacted soils, overhead wires, underground utilities, sidewalks, road salt, and passing vehicles all significantly hinder a tree’s ability to thrive and survive, and limit the selection of trees that can be safely and appropriately planted within these zones.

Setback plantings allow public tree managers more flexibility in working with residents to plant “the right tree in the right place” and can provide trees with more “growing space” and better conditions under which to survive, and achieve their full potential.

According to the experiences of Tree Wardens around Massachusetts who have been engaging in setback plantings within their communities, setback trees tend to be healthier, more vigorous, develop better canopies and root areas, and receive better care by adjacent property owners than trees planted in similar situations within the right-of-way.

Additional advantages to setback planting include:

- Setback planting can allow for a **partnership** between municipal tree managers and private owners and help make the most of public tree care tax dollars and resources.
- It is an effective way to **work with residents** in selecting and planting the "right tree for the right place." Resident commitment to take pride and care for "their" trees is therefore amplified.
- There is less chance for tree disfigurement as a result of **fewer conflicts with utilities**.
- This also results in potentially **improved electrical and other utility reliability**.

What are the potential disadvantages of setback planting?

Tree Wardens engaged in setback plantings cite few disadvantages to the practice. However, some of the potential disadvantages may include:

- Loss of some streetscape design opportunities such as traffic calming, creating a barrier between pedestrian and vehicular traffic, and creating a tunnel-like design.
- Some loss of municipal control or protection of setback trees.
- The challenges of educating property owners in proper tree care.
- The potential to favor planting in neighborhoods where setbacks are possible and overlook neighborhoods or areas where setbacks are not possible.