



## beautify & maintain downtown trees

### OVERVIEW

Trees and flowers create healthier downtown streetscapes, both environmentally and aesthetically. Street trees purify the air, provide shade and reduce heat and traffic noise. They also help control stormwater runoff, increase property values and beautify the city. One mature, healthy tree can absorb carbon dioxide at a rate of roughly 48 pounds per year and can cool the air by up to 13 degrees. It can also produce as much oxygen in one season as 10 people inhale in a year. However, in order to appreciate these benefits, street trees and flowers whether in hanging flower baskets or planted in tree boxes or elsewhere, require a tremendous amount of care.

### BE AWARE

Please check trees for the following situations:

- Tree damage, disease, inability to thrive, fatality
- Attached signage, wires, ropes, or lights. They should be removed.
- A lack of water. Young trees should be watered twice weekly for the first few growing seasons.
- A lack of mulch. Mulch should be up to 3 inches deep, and root flare should be visible.
- Girdling tree grates, branches too low for people to pass under, parked bicycles and vendor vehicles in tree spaces.

### WHAT PROPERTY MANAGERS CAN DO

#### Take Care of Your Tree

- Determine if it needs water — 25 gals./wk. or 1.5"
- Pour 5-10 gallons slowly, inches away from the trunk without washing away soil and mulch, or fill a water bag weekly
- Water weekly as needed, unless ground is frozen
- Add 2-3 inches of mulch on entire planting space
- Keep mulch away from trunk/root flare to avoid infections
- Use mulch made from a shredded hardwood only
- Prevent fungal diseases; do not over mulch
- Select shallow-rooted plants and bulbs that don't compete with a tree for water and nutrients in a tree box.

#### Apply for a Tree Permit

- To plant, prune, or remove a tree within the public right-of-way you or a contractor must first obtain a Public Space Tree Permit
- To remove a tree 55" or more in circumference requires a Special Tree Permit in D.C.
- For information on how to obtain a permit, visit <http://ddot.dc.gov>

#### Adopt a Tree and Become a Canopy Keeper

- Sign a two-year agreement with the District Department of Transportation's (DDOT) Urban Forestry Administration (UFA) to care for young trees and receive free watering bags

### IF YOU SEE A PROBLEM:

Contact UFA at 202-671-5133 **OR**  
Contact the **BID** email via [trees@downtowndc.org](mailto:trees@downtowndc.org)  
or phone at (202) 661-7571

**Please provide the location of the trees and the problem.**  
**Do not break off branches or prune a tree yourself.**

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## BACKGROUND

### TREES

Trees within one-square-mile of the DowntownDC Business Improvement District (BID) area fall mainly under the jurisdictions of two entities. Trees located along the curb fall under UFA, while most trees that grow in parks fall under the National Park Service (NPS), (also responsible for the landscape, along Pennsylvania Avenue, from 15th to 3rd Streets NW). Both UFA and NPS have established partnerships with the DowntownDC BID and other entities to care for trees and the places where they grow. Tree plantings occur from October to April annually, so submit new requests at <http://ddot.dc.gov> for the next fiscal year by June 15th.

### FLOWERS

Select shallow-rooted plants and bulbs that don't compete with tree for water and nutrients in a tree box. These plants should be planted around the perimeter of the tree box to avoid the tree's roots. Additionally, [here](#) you will find the list of companion plants provided by UFA.

### TREE BOXES

According to Downtown Streetscape Regulations, tree boxes or tree space maintenance are the responsibility of an adjacent property. UFA only maintains the tree. Properties can install tree fences up to 12" without obtaining a public space permit. Also, maintenance and installation can be handled by a variety of tree fence fabricator companies or through contractors chosen by a property manager.

Shallow-rooted bulbs and plants should be planted around the perimeter of the tree box to avoid the tree's roots. Click [here](#) for PDF of the UFA Recommended Companion Plants.

### WHAT IS OUT THERE

The DowntownDC BID estimates there are about 2,500 street trees in the BID area. In addition to the street trees, 36 NPS parks and reservations within the DowntownDC BID area have about 1,000 trees. In the past 5 years, UFA has completed nearly 1,000 service requests within the BID.

## WHAT THE DOWNTOWNDC BID DOES

- Each quarter the BID surveys and inventories trees and tree boxes along with other permanent assets. An inventory of items within the tree box includes iron grates, plants, borders/hoops, mulch, soil compaction, miscellaneous items in the tree box, and whether a grate is damaging the tree trunk.
- The BID meets regularly with UFA to discuss tree-related conditions, collaborative projects, and best practices.
- The BID also informs property managers of best care practices, ways to improve their tree space or box or both and informs properties of the tree conditions that are their responsibility.

## WHEN TREES NEED TO BE REMOVED

- Tree is in poor condition or declining
- Tree is diseased and the disease may spread to other trees
- Tree is in path of infrastructure development
- Tree obstructs pedestrian or vehicular traffic
- Tree presents hazard to people or property

## RESOURCES

Contact UFA at 202-671-5133, or the BID at 202-661-7571 with your 311 request. Your request will be fulfilled based on the following schedule:

- Emergency Requests — within 72 hours
- Routine Maintenance Requests — Inspection within 72 days
- Pruning and Removal — Up to 9 months to complete
- Tree Planting Requests — Up to 730 days