

City Park Strips, City Trees and Homeowner's Role

Our tree committee coordinator has communicated with our City's Urban Forester to get some guidance regarding city street trees, as we are going into another hot, dry summer. She was informed that all property owners are responsible for maintaining their yards, the sidewalk, and the landscaped park strip in front of or adjacent to their property. The City regulates that maintenance by setting and enforcing a maintenance standard. In the case of City street trees, the City also provides maintenance, such as pruning and trimming. However, it's up to us to remove the fallen leaves and water the tree. Sacramento City Code 12.56.080 spells out some of the maintenance responsibilities of the property owner with regard to city trees in park strips.*

The homeowner (or occupant) has the primary responsibility to water City street trees, as the City only has the resources to give supplemental water to some of the newly planted trees. Watering a tree uses less water than watering a lawn if done properly.

Watering Resources and Information for City Trees and Your Trees

The Sacramento Tree Foundation has a lot of valuable information about how to water trees while conserving water.

- Caring for trees in a low water landscape: <https://www.sactree.com/waterwise>
- There are other resources online as well:
- Watering young trees: <https://www.sactree.com/water>
- Drought care for young trees: <https://www.sactree.com/youngtreesindrought>
- Watering mature trees: <https://www.sactree.com/pages/113>
- Drought care for mature trees: <https://www.sactree.com/pages/493>

The Sacramento Tree Foundation warns that mulch is NOT:

- Rubber, rocks, decomposed granite, weed cloth, artificial turf, plastic
- These can trap heat in the soil and cause damage to tree roots

There is also a city zoning ordinance that prohibits putting artificial turf within the dripline of a tree - even a tree in your own yard. (Sacramento City Code 17.612.010(A)(1)(b).) (Illustration of dripline: <https://www.sactree.com/pages/493>)

The City's Water Conservation webpage also has an irrigation calculator:
<http://www.beyondthedrought.com/index2.php>

If you have ivy on your City street tree it is important to cut the ivy near the base of the tree and let it die. Do not rip it from the tree, which will damage the bark.

**The pertinent part of the maintenance ordinance - 12.56.080 - says:*

"C. The owner of any lot adjacent to a street shall maintain any unpaved portion of the adjacent public right-of-way. Maintenance includes irrigation of city trees or other plantings, subject to federal, state and local government restrictions on water use, and keeping the unpaved areas free from weeds or any obstructions contrary to public safety.

D. The owner of any lot adjacent to a street, at their own expense, is responsible for removal of fallen leaves and other debris from city trees."