

Parks and Parkways Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why doesn't the City top the trees so they will remain small?

The topping of trees is strongly discouraged because so many negative effects resulting from this practice. Topped trees will actually need to be trimmed more frequently and topping forces the aggressive growth of "suckers" that originate from the point of each cut. This growth quickly fills the crown of the tree which causes: increased pruning frequency resulting in higher maintenance costs; the formation of a dense crown which makes the tree prone to blowing over in heavy winds; and, trees which develop weak and dangerous branch attachments prone to breakage.

Q: Can I trim the parkway tree in front of my home?

No. Trees located in the parkway are the property of the City of Costa Mesa. Trees are trimmed by district in accordance to ISA standards. Residents who have questions about the trimming of the parkway tree may contact the Maintenance Services Division at (714) 754-5123.

Q: Can I plant my own street tree?

No. Residents that are interested in having a tree planted in the parkway may contact the Maintenance Services Division. The City plants trees approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission and are inspected and located by the City arborists.

Q: I've had problems with roots breaking up my sidewalk in the past. Why plant again?

The benefit of planting a parkway tree consist of providing canopy coverage for the City, decrease in surface heats, provide oxygen to the environment, prevents rain water run off and erosion, and provides aesthetic value to the City. Newer species and varieties are available that have growth rates from slow to moderate and less root intrusion. Planning and planting the right tree is now dependent on parkway size, soil and neighborhood conditions.

Q: Who maintains and prunes the trees, other than making sure they are watered?

The Maintenance Services Division is responsible for maintenance of public property trees. When new trees are planted in City parkways, residents are encouraged to water the trees to aid in their establishment.

Q: What if I want a tree removed or replaced?

So that the City of Costa Mesa does not lose its tree population faster than it can replant new ones, the Parks and Recreation Commission has established guidelines to prevent the removal of trees simply for the sake of removing them. Trees must be dangerous or diseased without remedy or be contributing to a hazardous condition. For [criteria for parkway tree removal](#) and/or replacement, please refer to Section 4.0 of the Streetscape and Median Development Standards.

Q: What happens if tree roots damage my sewer or water line?

Please refer to a separate FAQ sheet for [tree roots in sewer lines](#).

Q: Whom do I call for tree-related problems?

When a resident has a concern about a street tree, or would like to report a hazardous condition, the resident should call the Maintenance Services Division at (714) 754-5123. The staff is available Monday through Friday from 6:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to answer questions.

Q: Who clears branches from around power lines adjacent to my home?

Local utility companies are responsible for maintaining clearance around electrical, telephone and cable lines. See your local telephone pages for contact information.