



# **ARBORICULTURAL SPECIFICATIONS AND STANDARDS OF PRACTICE**

Adopted 1981  
Revised October 2009

# Table of Contents

1.0	Intent	3
2.0	Purchase/Planting	3
3.0	Pruning	9
4.0	Tree Preservation	10
5.0	Removals	11
6.0	Fertilization	13
7.0	Pesticides	13
8.0	Cable/Bracing	14
9.0	Special Situations	14
10.0	Glossary of Terms	15
11.0	Attachments	

**Attachment 1** – Suburban Tree Consortium Purchase Specifications

**Attachment 2** – Suburban Tree Consortium Planting Specifications

**Attachment 3** – List of General and Deferred Species

**Attachment 4** – American Standard for Nursery Stock, ANSI Z601, 1998.

**Attachment 5** - Standard Practices for Tree Care Operations, American National Standards Institute ANSI A300, 2001.

**Attachment 6** - Safety Requirements for Tree Care Operations, American National Standards Institute, Inc. ANSI Z133.1, 2002.

**Attachment 7** – Line of Sight Clearance (Section 25-1-8 of the Village Code)

**Attachment 8** – Internal Tree Protection Specifications relating to Village Capital Improvement Projects

## 1.0 Intent

All persons, including Village staff, contractors and agents and residents, performing arboricultural care of Village-owned parkway trees and/or performing work affecting parkway trees shall comply with the minimum standards set forth in existing Village Ordinances and Codes and this Arboricultural Specification and Standard Manual (the “Manual”) for the Village of Oak Park adopted on November 15, 2004 and as hereafter amended to the extent that such standards do not conflict with existing Village Ordinances and Codes. In the event of a conflict between any provision contained in this Manual and any provision contained in an existing Village ordinance and/or code, the provision(s) set forth in the Manual shall prevail.

The Standards set forth in the manual may be amended at any time that experience, new research or laws indicate that improved methods or circumstances make it advisable. The Village Forester with the advice and assistance of the Forestry Commission may make recommendations to the Village Board for amendments to these Arboricultural Specifications and Standards.

## 2.0 Purchase/Planting

The Village is an active member of the Suburban Tree Consortium (STC). It is through the STC that the Village purchases and plants the bulk of the trees that are planted annually on the parkways. The STC, with input from participating municipalities, has developed specifications for the purchase and planting of trees obtained through their program. **(See Attachment 1 – Article II of the Suburban Tree Consortium Request for Proposals for Growing Tree Supply entitled “Scope of Work” attached hereto as Attachment 1 and hereinafter referred to as “Purchase Specifications” and Section 3 of the Request for Proposals for Planting Parkway Trees of the Suburban Tree Consortium entitled “Detailed Specifications” attached hereto as Attachment 2 and hereinafter referred to as “Planting Specifications”).**

The STC purchase and planting specifications set forth in Attachments 1 and 2 (hereinafter collectively the “STC specifications”) as amended below in Section 2 shall be the Village standard for the purchase and planting of parkway trees.

**2.1 Species** – The STC specifications do not direct the planting of certain species in the Village. The manual, through Attachment 3 hereto entitled “List of General Use and Deferred Species,” provides a list of approved General Use Species from which plantings can be chosen and a list of Deferred Species from which plantings may not be chosen.

- A. “General Use Species” are those species which best meet the Village’s long-term goals for diversity, appropriateness, maintenance and aesthetics in relation to the space, soils and special needs of the Village. This is the Village’s approved list of general species for planting on Village-owned property.
- B. “Deferred Species” are those species that are currently not approved for planting on the parkways of the Village. Each deferred species listed in Attachment 3 sets forth the reason(s) it is so designated.
- C. The Forestry Commission, in conjunction with the Village Forester, shall review the list of general and deferred species at least every three years to determine appropriate revisions.

**2.2 Planting Stock Requirements** - The STC specifications do not set forth specific requirements for the planting stock provided to the Village. The Village’s current planting stock requirements are as follows:

- A. Size - Unless otherwise specified by the Village Forester, all trees shall be a minimum of 1 ½ inches in diameter measured six-inches (6”) above ground level. Larger diameter (caliper) requirements may be required in the STC purchase specifications. Where not stated in the STC purchase specifications (Attachment 1) height and caliper standards greater than 2½ inches may be required in accordance with **Attachment 4 entitled the American Standard for Nursery Stock, ANSI Z60.1, 1998.**
- B. Grade - All trees shall have comparatively straight trunks, well developed leaders and tops, and the roots shall not only be characteristic of the species, and its cultivars, but also shall exhibit evidence of proper nursery pruning practices. At the time of planting, all trees must, have a full healthy crown, be free of mechanical injuries and display no other objectionable features that will affect the future form, health and beauty of the plant. Additional grade requirements, where not stated in the STC purchase specifications (Attachment 1), shall be determined in accordance with the standards set forth in **Attachment 4 entitled American Standard for Nursery Stock, ANSI Z60.1, 1998.**
- C. Purchase Condition – All trees purchased for parkway use shall be balled and burlapped. No containerized nursery stock shall be used, other than approved grow bag plantings as specified by the STC purchase specifications (Attachment 1).

**2.3 Locations and Spacing** – The following parkway tree location and spacing requirements shall apply throughout the Village.

- A. Minimum Width – No tree shall be planted in parkways less than five-feet (5') in width except as approved by the Village Forester when circumstances warrant. No tree shall be planted in an area or in a container which does not allow for proper development, either at the time of planting or based on the estimated size of the tree at maturity.
- B. Distance from Infrastructure - To allow for maintenance, minimize infrastructure damage and promote line of sight safety, trees shall be planted at least fifteen-feet (15') from driveways and alleys, twenty-five (25') from street intersections, ten-feet (10') from a crosswalk, and five-feet (5') from a roundway. In addition, to provide adequate illumination as intended, no tree shall be planted closer than ten-feet (10') from an existing utility pole or streetlight standard. Exceptions to this rule may be made by the Village Forester when circumstances warrant and public safety is not threatened.
- C. Distance Between Trees - Spacing of trees is a function of local site conditions, the species or cultivars used, and their mature height, spread and form. Generally, all trees that are large at maturity shall be spaced a minimum of fifty feet (50') center-to-center unless otherwise determined by the Village Forester; and all intermediate/ornamental trees shall be spaced a minimum of thirty-five feet (35') center-to-center unless otherwise determined by the Village Forester.
- D. Centerline - Trees shall be planted on the centerline of the parkways, unless in the opinion of the Village Forester, there is sufficient reason to plant the trees off-center.
- E. Overhead Utility Conflicts - Only small-growing trees shall be planted under overhead power lines. Trees planted to the side of power lines shall be carefully selected for mature habit to minimize future conflicts.
- F. Modifications - The above minimum spacing standards may be modified by the Village Forester for new plantings in business areas zoned as B4 or C. In these areas, trees may be placed on a closer spacing recognizing the limited availability of planting spaces and the advantages of allowing trees greater access to larger volumes of soil through cluster plantings.

## 2.4 Methods of Tree Planting and Support

- A. Tree Planting Stock Type - All trees intended for planting shall be balled and burlapped or in an approved grow bag prior to moving.
- B. Tree Planting Pit Size - On residential parkways, the planting pits shall be at least twelve-inches (12") larger in diameter than the diameter of the root ball in order to accommodate the roots without crowding.
- C. Tree and Plant Planting Pit Depth - The planting pit shall not be dug deeper than the depth of the root ball. The root ball will be placed on undisturbed subgrade. The resulting hole shall place the root flare of the tree at or not more than one-inch (1") above the grade of the surrounding soil. Trees shall be planted no deeper than previously grown with due allowance for settling.
- D. Baskets – When full baskets are used in the packaging and delivery of balled and burlapped trees, as a minimum, the top half of the basket shall be removed before planting. When half baskets are used, no removal of the basket is required.
- E. Twine – When non-biodegradable twine is used in the packaging of a balled and burlapped tree, all twine encircling the trunk and the top half of the ball shall be removed. If biodegradable, the twine should be cut away from the trunk.
- F. Trunk Wrapping and Staking - Tree trunks shall not be wrapped and guyed at time of planting. Approved burlap wrap may be seasonally used if trees prove to be susceptible to cracking or mechanical damage. All tree wrap shall be removed the following Spring. Staking of trees shall not be used unless deemed necessary for public safety or the survival of the tree.
- G. Backfill - In most instances, the backfill around the ball shall be the same soil as that which was removed from the hole; however, in cases where rocks, stones, etc., are encountered, top soil shall be used.
- H. Berm - A shallow berm of soil, approximately three to four inches high shall be formed just inside the edge of each planting hole to serve as a water reservoir.
- I. Mulching – A three-inch layer of mulch shall be placed at an even depth around the tree on the interior of the berm. Mulch shall be pulled away from the trunk so as not to be touching the trunk. *Volcano-mulching* as defined in Section 10 is not a permitted mulching technique.

**2.5 Early Maintenance** – It is imperative that proper care takes place after planting to promote the early healthy development of the tree. The following maintenance requirements shall apply for the first three years after tree planting.

- A. Watering – Spring and Fall planted trees shall get a thorough watering on the day of planting and will be watered every ten days thereafter during the then current and next growing season. When natural precipitation maintains good soil moisture, watering for that period can be delayed until the next ten-day cycle.
- B. Insect and Disease Control - Frequent and thorough inspections shall be made to determine when measures for the control of diseases and insects shall be taken. Plants in a weakened condition following transplanting may be more susceptible to insects and disease than are vigorously growing trees and shall be monitored appropriately. If it becomes necessary to spray, insecticides or fungicides that are recommended for safe and effective control shall be used or approved for use by the Village Forester and shall be applied in accordance with State and Federal Standards.
- C. Training Pruning - Training pruning refers to the five-step method of pruning young trees to establish good form and improve branch structure. This type of pruning occurs twice.

The first pruning event is at the time of planting and consists of the removal of broken, diseased, dying or dead branches.

The second pruning event occurs three years after planting and shall include the five following steps:

- Step 1 – Remove broken, diseased, dying or dead branches.
- Step 2 – Select a central leader and remove competing branches.
- Step 3 – Select the lowest permanent scaffold branch.
- Step 4 – Select scaffold branches and cut back or remove competing branches.
- Step 5 – Select temporary branches.

All pruning practices shall conform to Section 5 of the ANSI A300-2001 Standards set forth in **Attachment 5 hereto entitled Standard Practices for Tree Care Operations, the American National Standards Institute ANSI A300, 2001**).

## 2.6 Container Plantings

- A. Installation Requirements - No container may be placed in any manner that would constitute a visibility hazard. The planting medium shall be of sufficient volume to support and sustain plant materials, and the Village Forester shall approve the design and construction details.
- B. Maintenance of Containers - Containers, plants and their maintenance are the responsibility of the Department of Public Works or its approved contractor.

## 2.7 Tree or Shrub Wells and Sidewalk Cutouts

- A. The purpose of this section is to provide enough space to support healthy trees. Wherever possible tree or shrub well or sidewalk cut out size should be maximized to support healthy trees.
- B. Size - The design of any new tree or shrub well or sidewalk cutout for a tree or shrub or any existing tree or shrub well or sidewalk cut out for a tree or shrub for which a replacement tree or shrub is being considered shall be such as to provide adequate drainage and shall be approved by the Village Forester. The dimensions for tree or shrub wells or sidewalk cuts shall be:
  - 1) For trees: at least five feet (5') in length and width if square or rectangular and if circular, the circle must include the entire minimum approved square of five feet (5') in length and width.
  - 2) For shrubs: at least three feet (3') in length and width if square or rectangular and if circular, the circle must include the entire minimum approved square of three feet (3') in length and width.
  - 3) Replacement trees or shrubs may only be planted in existing tree or shrub wells or sidewalk cut outs for trees or shrubs if the tree wells or sidewalk cut outs meet the above prescribed dimensions. Grates may be used where the expansion of existing tree wells or sidewalk cut outs would otherwise reduce existing sidewalk space below acceptable limits.
- C. Tree or shrub wells or sidewalk cuts shall at all times be maintained in the condition specified in the approved design.
- D. Obsolescence - Any tree or shrub well or sidewalk cut out not serving its designed function because the tree has been removed and is not to be

replaced shall be restored by the Village to a condition satisfactory to the Village Engineer.

- E. Soil Volume - In areas where openings in pavement are required to establish planting sites, or where above ground planters are to be used, the most restrictive space limitation is usually associated with the volume of acceptable rooting habitat as opposed to limitations of crown space. For this reason, minimum plant spacing in these areas is determined by available soil volume.

### 3.0 Pruning

Pruning shall be done to maintain a four (4) year pruning cycle. Pruning shall comply with the ANSI pruning and safety standards set forth in **Attachment 5 entitled Standard Practices for Tree Care Operations, the American National Standards Institute ANSI A300, 2001 and Attachment 6 - Safety Requirements for Tree Care Operations, the American National Standards Institute, Inc. ANSI Z133.1, 2002).**

- A. Types of Pruning – All pruning activities to be performed on Village trees shall conform to the following ANSI pruning types:
  - 1) Training – Training refers to the five-step method of pruning to establish good form and improve branch structure on young trees in conformity with Section 2.5C above.
  - 2) Cleaning – Cleaning consists of selective pruning to remove one or more of the following parts: dead, diseased, crossing, and/or broken branches. Branches of all sizes may be removed for this type of pruning. There shall be no minimum size restriction.
  - 3) Raise – Raising consists of selective pruning to provide vertical clearance.  
  
To the extent possible, pruning shall maintain the crown shape and symmetry typical of the tree species being pruned. Pruning shall allow free passage of pedestrians and vehicles. In order to achieve this objective, all large established trees shall be pruned to allow eight feet (8') of clearance over sidewalks, and sixteen feet (16') of clearance at curbside. This type of pruning will guarantee clearance over the sidewalk and street until the next cycle.
  - 4) Reduce – Reduction consists of selective pruning to decrease height and/or spread. No limb over six inches (6") in diameter at the branch attachment shall be removed without the consent of the Village Forester.

- 5) Thin – Thinning consists of selective pruning to reduce density of live branches. No limb over six inches (6”) in diameter at the branch attachment shall be removed without the consent of the Village Forester.
- B. In addition to the ANSI pruning and safety standards set forth in Attachments 5 and 6 hereto, the following requirements shall be observed with regard to the pruning of all trees on the public way. In the event of a conflict between the ANSI standards and the requirements set forth in this Section 3B, the requirements of Section 3B shall apply:
- 1) Topping - No topping of public trees shall be permitted.
  - 2) Intersections and Line of Sight - Pruning at street intersections shall be done in compliance with section 25-1-8 of the Village Code.
  - 3) Street Lights - It shall be the policy of the Village Forester and the Village Engineer to cooperate in the placement and selection of lighting standards and the development of a system of tree pruning that will provide effective street illumination. Branches that block lights shall be pruned to remove such obstruction. This subsection does not require, but may allow, pruning above the streetlight.
  - 4) Street signs and traffic lights - Branches that block the view of street signs or traffic control devices shall be pruned so that the view of the device is clear to oncoming traffic. However, if the street sign publicizes a general restriction not unique to the particular site (such as “No Driving in Parking Lanes”), consideration may be given to moving the sign.
  - 5) Climbing Spurs - No spurs or climbing irons shall be used in the trees except when trees are to be removed.
  - 6) Wound Dressing - Although wound dressing will not normally be applied to pruning cuts, the Village Forester may authorize the use of wound dressing if research or individual conditions show it to be appropriate.
  - 7) Street Closures - Whenever tree maintenance or removal requires streets to be blocked off to public service, the police and fire departments shall be notified of the location and length of time the street will be blocked. Notification shall also be given to these departments upon the removal of such barriers or if such barriers are to remain longer than originally expected. All traffic controls

shall conform to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control, U.S. Department of Transportation, and Federal Highway Administration.

The Village Forester may modify individual requirements not inconsistent with these standards when such modifications promote the health of trees and safety of persons and property.

## 4.0 TREE PRESERVATION

The Village's primary forestry goal is to maintain a healthy tree canopy. Tree preservation is an important element of this goal. All construction that affects parkway trees must adhere to the preservation specifications found in Attachment 8 hereto entitled Internal Tree Protection Specifications For Construction.

## 5.0 REMOVALS

Healthy trees are an important component of the Village, and contribute significantly to the quality of the local environment. It is the policy of the Village to maintain parkway trees as long as they remain assets to the community, and to remove parkway trees when they become a liability.

**5.1 Tree Removal** - There are many factors that contribute to transforming a tree from an asset to a liability. Disease, decay, and mechanical damage can cause a tree to be structurally unsound, and therefore unsafe. The location of a tree may also cause it to be unsafe in the form of interfering with traffic visibility. It is the policy of the Village to base tree removals on safety related criteria (and therefore liability).

- A. Reasons for Removal – A tree may be potentially removed when the Village Forester or another Village-designated Arborist concludes that any of the following conditions apply:
- 1) An elm is infected with Dutch Elm Disease and it is not possible to remove all of the disease by pruning. (See Village Code Sections 25-2-1 thru 4).
  - 2) A tree is infected with another contagious and fatal disease.
  - 3) The tree is dead.
  - 4) There is a substantial and imminent risk of failure which could cause injury or significant property damage, and corrective measures are neither feasible nor cost effective.

- 5) Trees are blocking vehicular view at an intersection or alley and pruning cannot bring the trees into compliance with Village Ordinance. **(See Section 25-1-8 of Village Code).**
- 6) A tree is injured by construction, lightning, vandalism, or auto accident and cannot be saved.
- 7) More than fifty (50%) of the crown is missing or dying as a result of improper pruning, decline or storm damage.
- 8) Species that may be considered high-risk in parkway adjacent to an area being newly developed.
- 9) Tree is in the way of Village-authorized construction project designed to benefit the community in general; rerouting of construction or alternative tree protection measures are not feasible (e.g. road widening, main break repair).
- 10) Tree is almost totally obstructing growth of an adjacent tree specimen that is clearly superior (based on species, condition and location).
- 11) Unauthorized trees recently planted that do not meet code requirements due to species, spacing or location.
- 12) Tree trunk is growing into and damaging a fence, buffalo box, utility pole, or fire hydrant.
- 13) Large-growing species under power lines cannot be pruned for adequate clearance without severely compromising the tree's appearance or long-term survival.
- 14) A serious chronic condition exists which will result in tree death before its normal lifespan (e.g. entire trunk is completely encircled with girdling roots).
- 15) Tree trunk (not just roots) has grown into and is lifting a driveway apron or sidewalk, creating a high-risk condition. Procedures being undertaken to alleviate the risk will kill the tree and alternate measures for alleviating the risk are not possible.

A final decision on a tree removal request will always try to balance the needs of the adjacent property owner, the Village and its citizens.

Except in emergencies, a homeowner shall be notified five (5) business days before a tree on the parkway at his or her address is removed along with the

reason(s) for the removal. Where practical, the Village Forester shall notify the Forestry Commission of planned removals.

**5.2 Stump Grinding** - The stumps of all removed trees shall be ground to a depth of at least eight-inches (8”) below the ground level. The soil cavity shall be filled with clean topsoil and the area leveled and seeded. If the area where the tree is removed is to be paved, the stump shall be removed to a suitable depth to allow adequate paving. No tree shall be planted in the location of a tree stump unless no other space is available.

## **6.0 FERTILIZATION OF PARKWAY TREES**

The Village does not, as a policy, fertilize parkway trees. A resident who wishes to fertilize the parkway tree(s) adjacent to his/her property, shall request permission from the Village. The Village Forester has the authority to approve or deny a fertilization request. The following requirements must be followed.

- A. Standards - Fertilization of parkway trees shall conform to Section 11.1 through 12.6 of the ANSI A300 Standards attached hereto as **Attachment 5 entitled Standard Practices for Tree Care Operations, American National Standards Institute ANSI A300, 2001**).
- B. Permission - Residents applying for permission to fertilize must submit the following information: type of fertilizer, timing (week to be applied), quantity to be used, nutrient composition, and reason for fertilizing).

## **7.0 PESTICIDES ON PARKWAY TREES (Herbicides, Insecticides, Fungicides, etc)**

The Village, with two exceptions, does not, as a policy, use pesticides of any sort on its parkway trees. The exceptions are the Elm injection and the Emerald Ash Borer treatment programs. A resident who wishes to apply pesticides on the parkway tree(s) adjacent to his/her property, shall request permission from the Village. The Village Forester has the authority to approve or deny a pesticide application request. The following requirements must be followed.

- A. Permission - Residents applying for permission to apply pesticides must submit the following information: type of pesticide, timing (week(s) to be applied), quantity to be used, mineral composition, application method, and reason for pesticide use. If it is a **restricted-use pesticide**, resident must show proof of a valid Illinois Applicators license.
- B. Application – Pesticide application shall be avoided unless conditions warrant.

- 1) Suitable precautions shall be taken to protect and warn the public that pesticide application is being done in accordance with the Village of Oak Park Integrated Pest Management Plan.
- 2) Pesticide application shall be done only for the control of specific diseases or insects with the proper materials in the necessary strength, and shall be applied at the proper time to obtain the desired control. All application practices shall conform to Federal and State regulations.

## 8.0 CABLE/BRACING

The Village does not, as a policy, cable/brace parkway trees. If cabling/bracing is warranted, all work shall conform to Section 35.1 through 41.5.2 of the ANSI A300 Standards attached hereto as **Attachment 5 entitled Standard Practices for Tree Care Operations, American National Standards Institute ANSI A300, 2001.**

## 9.0 SPECIAL SITUATIONS

- A. Variances - Any person, corporation, partnership or other legal entity which desires to have action taken on parkway trees or shrubs in a manner which does not conform to the Forestry Ordinance or these Arboricultural Standards for the Village of Oak Park, may request a variance from such standards from the Village Forester. In those circumstances where this manual and/or the ordinances or codes of the Village have provided the Village Forester with discretion to vary requirements where special or unique circumstances warrant such action, the Village Forester may, with the advice of the Forestry Commission, grant or deny such request.
- B. Newspaper boxes - Newspaper boxes shall not be chained or otherwise secured to trees. The Village discourages the placement of such boxes in sidewalk cuts within five feet (5') from the trunk of a tree.
- C. Lights placed on Parkway Trees - Property owners who place lights on parkway trees shall not attach them so tightly that they might interfere with the tree's health. In addition, when the Village is scheduled to prune such trees, the property owner shall remove them to allow for such pruning. Decorative lights may not be left in parkway trees for periods exceeding two (2) years.

## 10.0 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Best Management Practices:** Practices considered by the profession to be the current standard for the industry.

**Cultural:** Any activity that modifies the structure or affects the internal function of the tree.

**Deferred Species:** A species that is currently not acceptable to plant on Village parkways.

**General Use Species:** A species that is currently acceptable to plant on Village parkways.

**Restricted Use Pesticide:** A pesticide that requires an applicators license from the State of Illinois.

**Root Protection Zone (RPZ):** An area around a tree defined by Village staff in which protection measures must take place.

**Volcano Mulching:** The piling of mulch in a mound against the base of the trunk. This practice is an unacceptable form of mulching.

## 10.0 Attachments

(Attachments may be viewed in the Office of the Village Clerk, 123 Madison St.)