

How to Care for Your Tree

Residential and commercial neighborhoods can be tough places for trees to grow. They compete for space with pedestrians and vehicles as well as above-ground and below-ground utilities. The first three years after planting are critical to tree survival.

Water:

The best thing you can do for your tree is give it a long, slow drink of water at least once a week during the spring and summer months. If you have a clean 5 gallon bucket, drill a few holes in the bottom. Fill the bucket with water, place it next to your tree and allow the water to slowly soak into the soil. If you don't have a 5 gallon bucket, a slow trickle of water from your garden hose will also work.

Weed Trimmers:

The leading cause of death for newly planted trees is weed trimmers. Young trees have thin bark and they can not survive if their bark is constantly damaged. If weeds grow near your tree, pull them by hand. Prevent weed growth by using mulch.

De-icing Salt:

Salt may be good for melting snow and ice, but it is not good for trees. If you use salt during the winter, the first drink of water your tree receives in the spring will be salt water. This will damage the roots. At the first sign of spring, rinse the soil around your tree with clean, fresh water. This will help your tree get ready for the growing season.

Fertilizers and Chemicals:

Your tree was fertilized in the nursery and does not need additional fertilizer. Avoid using herbicides or pesticides near your tree.



Mulch wide not deep.

image courtesy of International Society of Arboriculture

Mulch:

Mulch is not necessary, but it might help prevent weeds from growing near your tree. It also helps conserve soil moisture and prevents damage from lawnmowers and weed trimmers. You can use woods chips, straw, leaves, or other porous material.

An inch or two of mulch is all that is needed to cover the ground. Make a 2 foot wide circle of mulch around your tree, but do not allow the mulch to touch the tree trunk. More is not better!

“Volcano mulching” around the trunk restricts air flow which may lead to trunk decay and root problems.



“Mulch volcanoes” cause many problems for trees.

image courtesy of International Society of Arboriculture

Staking and Pruning:

In general, staking and pruning are not necessary for your newly planted tree. Staking wires can strangle your tree if they are not removed. As your trees grows, pruning may be necessary. Applying paint or tar to pruning wounds is not recommended and can cause additional problems. If the tree is pruned properly, it will naturally “heal” the wound. Consult a professional arborist for pruning mature trees.

For information on how to prune trees, visit www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/howtos/ht_prune/htprune.pdf

TREES FOR CORTLAND

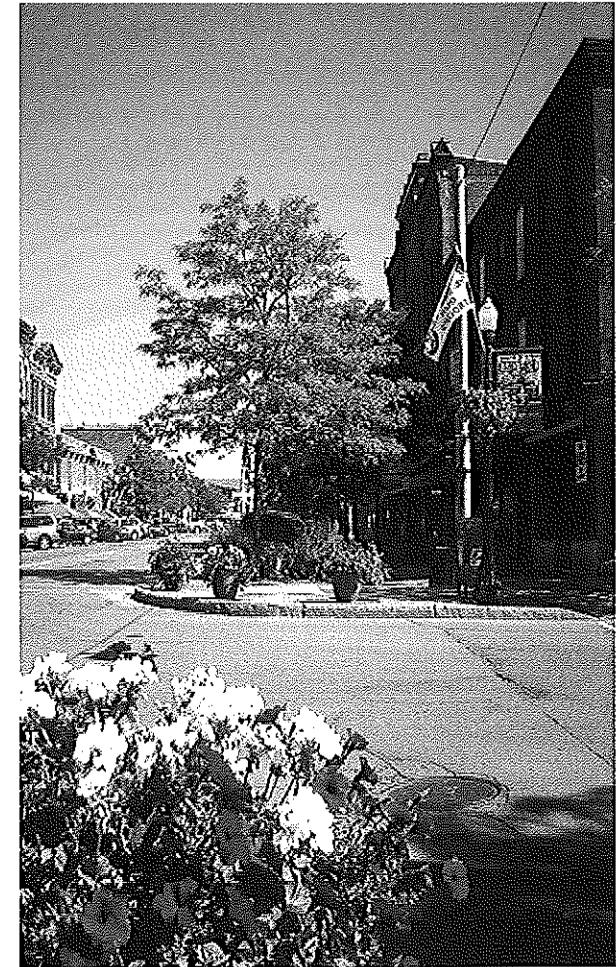


photo courtesy of Thom Hanford



City of Cortland
Landscape and Design Commission

Cortland's Community Forest

Cortland's Landscape and Design Commission is responsible for preserving and protecting the trees that help make Cortland a great place to live. The trees in our parks and along our streets create a forest in our city. According to the 2005 Street Tree Survey, there are only 0.13 street trees per person in Cortland. This is one-third fewer trees than the national average.

Why Plant Trees?

Trees contribute to our overall quality of life by improving air and water quality, contributing to aesthetic beauty, reducing energy costs by providing shade, slowing runoff from rainfall, preventing soil erosion, creating wildlife habitat, and increasing property values.

Cortland's Tree Lottery

To apply for the Tree Lottery, residential and commercial property owners should contact Thoma Development Consultants at 607-753-1433. If you are selected, a city contractor will plant a tree in front of your home or business (between the sidewalk and the curb). There is a limited supply of trees available for planting each year.

If you wish to plant your own tree, seek assistance from the City's Landscape and Design Commission. Visit www.cortland.org/city/commissions/landscape.htm for more information.

How to Plant a Tree

1. Assess the site and choose an appropriate species. If there are overhead wires or limited growing space, choose a small tree (less than 30 feet tall at maturity - see recommendations from National Grid at right). If there is unlimited growing space, choose a large tree. Planting the right tree in the right space now will prevent problems in the future.
2. Call the City's Department of Public Works at 607-753-6221 for a no-fee permit. Then call **Dig Safe New York** at 811 to locate underground utilities at least 3 days before you start digging. It's free and it's the law!
3. Dig a hole twice as wide as the root ball, but not deeper than the root ball. Place your tree in the hole making sure soil level of the root ball is the same as the surrounding soil level. If the root ball is below the surrounding soil level, remove the tree and add more soil to the hole. It is okay if the root ball is an inch or two above the surrounding soil level to allow for settling. Remove any rope or wire from around the root ball and discard or recycle it. Make sure the tree is straight, then begin to back fill the hole with soil. Pack the soil gently, but firmly to remove air pockets. You can slowly add water to help settle the soil.

Additional information about planting and pruning trees is available online:

www.arborday.org/trees/ninethings.cfm

www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/uf/plant_trees/planting_trees.htm

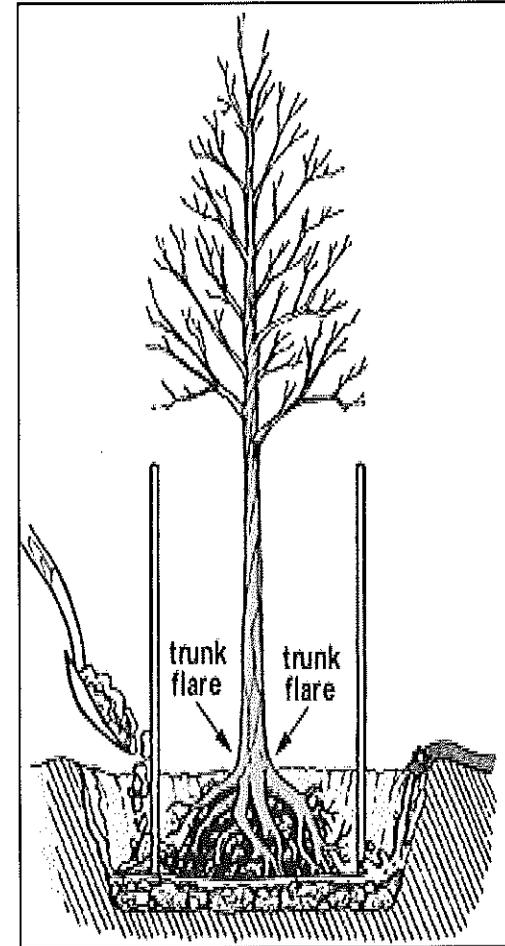


image courtesy of US Forest Service

When is the Best Time to Plant a Tree?

Trees can be planted in spring, summer, or fall. Conditions are most favorable in the late spring and early fall when there is usually abundant rainfall and the soil tends to be saturated. Trees should not be planted during the summer months unless they will be watered regularly.

Cortland's Tree Ordinance

Cortland adopted a Tree Ordinance in 2006 to ensure the protection of our trees. View the ordinance online:

www.cortland.org/city/treeordinance.pdf

For more information, contact the Mayor's Office at 607-753-0872.

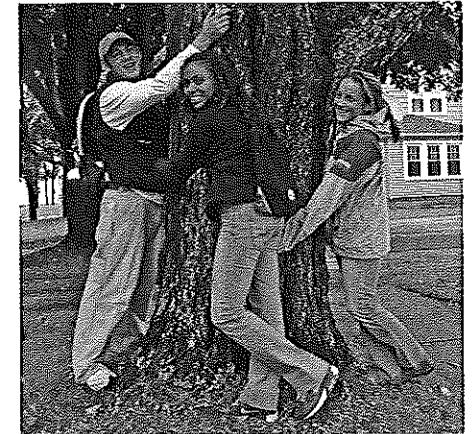


photo courtesy of Steven Broyles

Check these websites for more information:

Recommended Urban Trees from the Urban Horticulture Institute at Cornell University:
www.hort.cornell.edu/uhi
(click on Recommended Urban Trees)

Recommended Trees for Planting Under Utility Wires from National Grid:
www.nationalgridus.com/trees
(click on Avoid Tree & Utility Line Conflicts)

New York State Certified Arborists:
www.newyorkstatearborists.com
(click on Membership Directory)