



Urban Forestry

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Tree Removal Permit Process and Application

A Tree Removal Permit is required before any street tree or significant tree – alive, dead or hazardous – can be removed. A significant tree shall be a tree with any portion of its trunk within 10 feet of the public right-of-way, and (3) that satisfies at least one of the following criteria: (a) a diameter at breast height (DBH) in excess of twelve (12) inches, (b) a height in excess of twenty (20) feet, or (c) a canopy in excess of fifteen (15) feet.

Tree removal without a permit is a violation of Article 16 of the Public Works code and penalties may apply. Submission of form and receipt of payment, or written decisions after public hearings are not permits.

For each tree removed, a tree of equal replacement value or equivalent in-lieu fee is required, unless requirement is waived in writing by the Director of Public Works. All tree removals are subject to Tree Appraisal Process.

If a removal permit is approved, the removal of the tree is expected to be completed by the applicant and all costs associated with the removal are the responsibility of the applicant, including all costs associated with the purchase and planting of the replacement tree.

Permit Application Materials

- Submit the completed application form via email to urbanforestrypermits@sfdpw.org. **Submission of application and fee is not an approval.**
- Mail a non-refundable fee, made payable to CCSF-DPW-BUF to Bureau of Urban Forestry, 49 S Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94103. Submissions of incorrect fees will delay processing. Fees as of July 2025:
 - **1-3 trees** (non-construction related): \$488.00
 - **1-3 trees** (construction or development related): \$983.00
 - **4-9 trees:** \$1,308.00
 - **10+ trees:** \$1,966.00
 - **In-lieu fee for failure to plant 1 tree (per tree):** \$2,590.00
- If applicable, include proof of damage caused by trees such as paid invoices for repair. Note that although a tree has caused sidewalk, sewer or other property damage, removal may *not* be required, and a permit may *not* be granted.
- If the removal is related to new construction, include site plans accurately showing tree locations as well as your building permit number. All fees noted above are *per permit application*, unless noted otherwise.

Removal Process

1. A San Francisco Public Works inspector will evaluate the trees for removal.
2. If the Department recommends the tree be removed, it will be posted for a period up to 30 days. If objections to the removal are received, the removal will be scheduled for public hearing.
3. If the Department denies the removal, the applicant can request the case be scheduled for a public hearing.
4. After the hearing, a hearing officer will make a recommendation to the Director of San Francisco Public Works, who in turn will issue a final decision. The Director's decision may be appealed to the Board of Appeals. **Written decisions/Public Works Orders are not permits. You must request a copy of the permit after the decision is issued.**

Further Recommendations

- Have an International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist evaluate the tree and provide a written report. Certified Arborists can be found in the Yellow Pages under the heading "Tree Services" or the ISA website at <http://isa-arbor.com>.
- Use a licensed and insured certified arborist for any tree work.

KEEP THESE INSTRUCTIONS FOR REFERENCE

SUMMARY OF DPW ORDER 187246 PLANTING GUIDELINES. This list is not inclusive of complete guidelines.

It is recommended that the Permittee carry adequate liability insurance for his/her own protection and in order to carry the foregoing provisions into effect.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Trees to be planted must be from a minimum 15-gallon sized nursery container/ 24" box for construction related plantings.

The tree must eventually grow to upright to obtain 8' clearance over the sidewalk and 14' over the road.

Depending on the sidewalk width, the maximum new basin size is 4x6 or 5x5; the minimum is 3ft. by 3ft.

In no case shall the new street tree result in an obstructed sidewalk width of less than 48 inches.

Raised structures around the tree basin can present a tripping hazard and are not allowed.

A basin cover, perimeter of red brick, or other approved material is encouraged (but subject to approval) in the tree basin in the following cases:

- a. The sidewalk is less than 7.5ft. wide
- b. Bus Zones when a planting is allowed
- c. Areas with heavy pedestrian traffic
- d. Sidewalk with a grade of 10% or greater
- e. Tree basins adjacent to parking meters

MINIMUM RESTRICTIONS

Trees **may not be** planted within :

25ft. in front of a traffic signal

25 ft. of the property line on the approach to an intersection and 5ft of the property line on the exit from an intersection as the traffic flows IF a corner property

9, 15, and 21 feet of a street light for small, medium, and large mature size trees respectively

6ft of a utility pole

3ft of a parking sign unless the Department of Parking and Traffic agree to relocate the sign

3ft of a gas line, water line, electrical conduit and sidewalk furniture

5ft of a sewer line

5ft of a fire hydrant

10ft from a fire escape

A bus zone when the sidewalk is less than or equal to 15ft

A restricted parking Blue Zone

15ft of existing trees if both are small mature sized trees

The property owner shall check for the presence of underground utilities in the area of proposed planting and shall be solely responsible in avoiding interference with or damage to electric or telephone conduits, sewers and other utilities. Check for the location of your underground gas and utility services by calling Underground Service Alert (USA) at 800-642-2444 or visiting <https://usanorth811.org/>



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APPLICATION FOR TREE REMOVAL PERMIT

Email completed application to: urbanforestrypermits@sfdpw.org. Invoice for payment will be sent once application is received. Please enter the species to be removed and a proposed replacement species below.

Date: _____

BUF APPLICATION # _____

Proposed for removal

Street Tree(s) #: _____ Species _____

Street Tree(s) #: _____ Species _____

Significant Tree(s) #: _____ Species _____

TO PLANT #: _____ SPECIES _____

REASON FOR REMOVAL

SITE INFORMATION

Site Address: _____

Cross Street: _____ Zip Code: _____ Block/ Lot: _____

Owner Name: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Applicant/Authorized Agent Information

____ Check here if same as above

Applicant Name: _____

Company : _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

I agree to hold harmless the City and County of San Francisco, its agents, officers, and employees from any damage or injury caused by reason of planting, replacement, maintenance, or removal of the planter or plants. The owner(s) of the respective property shall be solely liable for any damages. The City has the right to deny this permit application, make changes in parking restrictions, such as designating new bus stops or blue zoned parking areas. Applicant is responsible for all work associated with permit, including tree removal, stump grinding, and tree planting where applicable.

Signature of Applicant/Authorized Agent

Date