

**From:** Wescoat [

**Sent:** Wednesday, June 27, 2018 3:15 PM

**To:** [gary@reedhilderbrand.com](mailto:gary@reedhilderbrand.com)

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**Subject:** Memo from Committee on Public Planting

Dear Gary,

The members of the Committee on Public Planting look forward to your leadership and expertise in working with the Task Force on the Urban Forest Master Plan for Cambridge.

The CPP is a volunteer group of Cambridge residents whose membership includes landscape architects, architects, garden designers, environmentalists, and other professionals. We meet monthly under the auspices of the DPW, with City Arborist David Lefcourt and DPW Commissioner Owen O'Riordan. Chapter 2.106 of the Cambridge Municipal Code defines our purview, and our meetings are open to the public.

We are united by our interest in and concern for our trees, and have a long record of detailed discussion, critical thinking, and strong advocacy in regards to expanding and protecting the urban forest. Besides the beauty they provide, trees are essential for cooling our city and making it more resilient to multiple effects of climate change. We feel that there is an urgent need to do our best to ensure that the City plants appropriate species in all possible locations, and that they thrive.

Toward that end, CPP's monthly meetings with the DPW have regularly addressed:

- \*Planting Specifications
- \*Review of planting proposals for development projects, city parks, streetscapes
- \*Discussion of tree planting issues as they arise
- \*Meetings with Eversource, Envision Cambridge, Neighborhood Groups, etc.

Based on our many years of meetings with the Urban Forestry Department, summarized here are our recommendations.

Best regards,

Maggie Booz co-chair, Paula Cortes, Chantal Eide, Sophia Emperador, Michael Hanlon, Dennis Jen, Kathleen Kelly, Jon Lewis, Carolyn Mathews, Johan Paulsson, Nancy Phillips, Cynthia Smith, Florrie Wescoat co-chair

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## **MEMO ON SPECIFIC PLANTING ACTIONS RECOMMENDED BY CPP**

This list of topics has grown out of CPP meetings and initiatives over the past ten years. It is organized according to the planting process (prior to planting, planting, maintenance). We also include a general category of considerations.

### ***PRIOR TO PLANTING***

1. Design favorable conditions for trees:
  - a. Allocate enough space for adequate soil volume for roots; design elongated tree wells; and enlarge existing tree wells as much as possible, wherever possible
  - b. Review sidewalk specifications to reduce harmful construction materials near tree wells, e.g. crusher run and hard pack which are impermeable, sterile and chemically harmful to trees
  - c. Increase permeable surfaces to allow rain to percolate into soil; and depave as much as possible
  - d. Site trees near other trees so that they can shade each other; and allow underground pathways for tree roots to intermingle and grow to reach lawn areas
  - e. Site trees to shade buildings and roads
  - f. Design with natural systems, e.g. create swales to channel rainwater to trees
2. Choose the best species that can adapt to urban conditions and that will be large enough to provide shade to buildings and roads; and choose low-pollen species for city squares, schools, and parks to reduce allergens
3. In the off-season, systematically grind stumps and enlarge tree wells so that trees can be planted in early spring when the soil is wet and cool; in fall, plant early enough for trees to settle in ahead of very cold weather
4. Amend the soil with organic material and biochar to build healthy soil

## **WHEN PLANTING**

1. Make sure specifications are adhered to, e.g., adequate water when the tree is planted
2. Don't plant when temperatures are above 80F degrees
3. In busy areas protect newly planted trees with temporary fencing to prevent soil compaction; and consider installing attractive permanent fencing in busy areas to protect trees long term

## **MAINTENANCE**

1. Extend regular weekly watering to 3 years for new trees. In drought, fill *both* gator bags each week. In dry falls, provide new trees with a deep watering before winter dormancy
2. Launch program of fertilization or compost tea application for City trees at regular intervals
3. Avoid heavy pruning in respect to both Eversource and City pruning cycle; review less intensive pruning techniques that meet safety requirements and also maintain the beauty of the tree's natural form; don't raise the canopy unnecessarily high
4. Use less damaging product than NaCl for de-icing; use minimum amount of de-icer to do the job
5. Use narrower sidewalk plows to avoid driving over tree wells; and instruct all plow operators to avoid trunk damage
6. Specify better protection for existing trees' root zones during construction

## **IN GENERAL AND GOING FORWARD**

1. Increase the Urban Forestry budget for more robust data collection and analysis and more frequent LiDar canopy surveys
2. Increase engagement and communication between the Urban Forestry Dept. and the public
  - a. Launch program to inform children and adults about the value of trees, and how to care for them; and engage more citizens to steward nearby public trees
  - b. Through outreach, plant higher rate of back-of-sidewalk trees on private property

- c. Make longitudinal tree inventory layers accessible to the public
- 3. Revise policy of allowing residents to block public trees in front of their property
- 4. Revise calculations for tree replacement to reflect the volume of the canopy that has been lost rather than measurement of DBH
- 5. Broaden CPP's scope beyond trees to include rain gardens, green walls, green roofs