

City Trees FAQs

Care and Responsibility of Trees:

The City of Bakersfield Recreation & Parks is advising property owners of the responsibility they have for trees adjacent to public roads and information regarding the planting, trimming and removal of these trees which may be done by the City.

Trees, including trees adjacent to public roads, are an important asset to the entire community. The City's role in maintenance of these trees is to provide for the safe use of the public City roads.

Periodically, property owners approach the City with requests about trimming or removing "street trees". These requests are based upon the assumption the City owns, and is responsible for the care of, the trees alongside the public roads. Although trees may be located in a right-of-way which was dedicated as part of the development, the land on which the right of way exists remains private property. The City is responsible for trees and other landscaping located in parks, on medians, and in "streetscapes".



Q: What is an "easement" or "road right-of-way"?

A: An easement is the right to use property which belongs to someone else. A road right-of-way is a specific type of easement. The City maintains roads within these easements. However, the City does not become the owner of the land on which the road is built, or any land adjacent to the road, unless it has officially acquired the property.

Q: Who owns the trees along the road?

A: Street trees belong to the actual or adjacent property owner, even if they are located within a dedicated road "right of way".

Q: What are my responsibilities for the trees in front of my property?

A: As a property owner, you are responsible for ensuring the safety of the street trees on property adjacent to the roadway in the same way you are responsible for trees which are located in your front, side or backyard areas.

Q: What tree maintenance does the City do?

A: The City determines whether plant material alongside City roadways impairs the use of the road, or pedestrian traffic. If so, the City will remove the plant material. A tree might be trimmed for height clearance, line of sight, or safety reasons.

Q: My property backs to a street. Can I plant trees and shrubs beyond my fence?

A: No. These areas are planted and maintained by the City. All plants in those areas belong to the City and are part of a landscaping plan for the area. Planting of any private landscaping materials, or removal or trimming of any City owned landscaping material, is forbidden by Bakersfield Municipal Codes 12.40.060 and 12.40.070.

Q: I am getting pine needles and leaves in my pool from a tree planted along the street. Can I cut it down?

A: No. Many trees shed needles or leaves which may cause problems with pools and spas. Bakersfield Municipal code 12.40.070 forbids the removal or harming of any tree by a private citizen. If the tree is diseased or damaged, the City of Bakersfield Recreation and Parks Department will determine if the tree can be saved or needs to be removed. If removed, replacements will match the area landscaping plan.

Q: Do utility companies have some responsibility for trimming trees?

A: Yes. To meet safety requirements utility companies will trim trees and foliage to keep the area between wires clear. Contact PG&E at 1-800-743-5000 if you believe a tree in your neighborhood poses a danger.

Q: When is the best time to plant trees?

A: The best time to plant trees and shrubs is in the late fall or early spring. Weather conditions during this time are optimum to establish roots before spring rain and summer heat.

Q: How do I care for a young tree?

A: Proper pruning is essential in developing a tree with a strong structure and desirable form. Trees receiving the appropriate pruning measures while young will require little corrective pruning when they mature. Contact a certified arborist for your specific tree.

Q: How do I prune my mature tree?

A: Pruning should be done with an understanding of how the tree responds to each cut. We recommend hiring a certified arborist to determine what is needed for your tree.

Q: Is there somewhere I can learn more about how to care for my trees?

A: Yes. The Tree Foundation of Kern offers information at www.urbanforest.com. Another general website recommended is www.treesaregood.org. These comprehensive websites offer tips on planting, picking an arborist, and additional information on selecting which trees grow best in Kern County.