Trees - Frequently Asked Questions

- What is a tree lawn?
    - A tree lawn is the strip of land between the sidewalk and the street.
- Who owns the tree lawn?
    - The tree lawn is a public right-of-way in which trees, utilities, and signage may be placed.
- Who owns trees in the tree lawn?
    - Property owners are responsible for tree lawn trees. According to Pennsylvania law and the City of Erie's ordinances, property owners are exclusively responsible for watering, pruning, and removing trees in the tree lawn. The City recognizes that this may be a burden on Erie residents and provides programs that help to offset the costs and perform the work of planting, pruning, and removal.
- I want to plant a tree in the tree lawn, do I need a permit?
    - Yes. All property owners must obtain a permit prior to planting.
- Who decides what trees can be planted?
    - The City has a list of approved tree species and as the property owner, you must work with the City Cultural Resource Manager to select a tree based on preference and mitigating factors (like overhead power lines).
- Where can I find a list of approved trees to be planted?
    - A full list of approved tree species can be found on the Urban Forest Committee's landing page here: https://www.erie.pa.us/government/authorities,_boards_and_commissions/urban_forest_committee.php

- I need to remove the tree lawn tree, do I need a permit?
    - Yes.
- Where can I find a permit?
    - All tree permits may be found on the Urban Forest Committee's landingpage here: https://www.erie.pa.us/government/authorities,_boards_and_commissions/urban_forest_committee.php
- Where do the fees go?
    - By State law, all permitting fees and fines are used to further the care and maintenance of trees.
- I want to take out the grass on the tree lawn and plant something else, do I need a permit?
    - Potentially. Larger shrubs and plants with deep or wide root systems will need a permit. Smaller plants do not.
- Can I pave or concrete over the tree lawn?
    - Not typically. Paving may prevent needed changes to the tree lawn and hinter municipal functions.
- Why are historic landmarks given priority on tree planting and removals?
    - Properties that have been declared historic landmarks by the City of Erie contribute to the public good. In an effort to recognize this uniqueness and help the general public be able to view these special places from the public right of way, the City prioritizes tree maintenance around these properties.

- Why is the City's tree program overseen by a Cultural Resource Manager?
    - The City's tree program is overseen by the Cultural Resource Manager because we recognize that forestry within a dense urban setting like Erie is an environment that has, over time, come to be because of the work of generations of Erieites. The urban canopy we have today and the one we create for tomorrow, inherently differs from wilderness in that it tells us about our ancestors and ourselves. For example, Pawpaw trees exist in this region because they were purposefully transported and cultivated by the native Erie peoples. The abundance of Norway Maples we have with us today were cultivated by early 20th century Erieites looking for a tree species that could thrive despite the soot and pollution endemic to the region. In this way we view our street trees as a cultural resource and strive to understand, and make publicly accessible, their history. The Cultural Resource Manager works with certified arborists, landscape architects, botanists, horticulturalists, historians, and others to achieve the needs of this program.
- A tree from my lawn fell down, can I place it on the curb for pick up?
    - In order for the City to be able to remove debris, trees must be cut down and tied together into reasonably-sized, easy-to-lift bundles and left on the curb during scheduled refuse pick up days. Entire trees, large limbs, and bundles that are too heavy to lift will be left on the curb for the property owner to address individually.
- My neighbor's tree is causing problems for me, who can I contact?
    - The City is not able to assist with trees on private property.
- Can the City remove a tree on my property?
    - No.

- Can the City fix the sidewalk that a tree lawn tree broke?
    - Generally, the City is not able to assist in fixing sidewalks.
- I need to fix the sidewalk in front of my house but there's a tree pushing up the concrete, can you remove the tree first?
    - Removal depends on many factors. If the tree is healthy, exploration of altering the shape of the sidewalk or creating an opening of the sidewalk must be explored first. If this is proven to not be a reasonable approach, a removal permit may be issued.
- Who can I talk to if I've got a question about trees?
    - All questions about trees should first be directed towards the City's Cultural Resource Manager, Matthew Falcone, at mfalcone@erie.pa.us or 814.870.1370.
- There is an issue with a tree in the boulevard, who can I contact?
    - The City's Cultural Resource Manager, Matthew Falcone, at mfalcone@erie.pa.us or 814.870.1370.
- There is an issue with a tree in a City park, who can I contact?
    - The City's Cultural Resource Manager, Matthew Falcone, at mfalcone@erie.pa.us or 814.870.1370.



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