3.14 Tree Planting and Preservation

Definition. Existing trees can be preserved or new trees can be planted to reduce stormwater runoff.

Tree canopy can intercept a significant amount of rainfall before it becomes runoff, particularly if the tree canopy covers impervious surface, such as in the case of street trees. Through the processes of evapotranspiration and nutrient uptake, trees located on a development site have the capacity to reduce stormwater runoff volumes and improve water quality. Further, through root growth, trees can improve the infiltration capacity of the soils in which they grow.

Both tree planting and tree preservation can contribute to stormwater management on a site.

3.14.1 Preserving Existing Trees During Construction

The preferred method for increasing tree cover at a development site is to preserve existing trees during construction, particularly where mature trees are present. Existing trees are preserved during construction through a four-step process:

Step 1: Inventory existing trees.

Step 2: Identify trees to preserve.

Step 3: Protect trees and soil during construction.

Step 4: Protect trees after construction.

Inventory Existing Trees. A licensed forester or arborist must conduct an inventory of existing trees and forested areas at the development site before any site design, clearing, or construction takes place, as specified by the Urban Forestry Administration (UFA).

The inventory must include a survey of existing trees and determine their size, species, condition, and ecological value. Locations of trees and forest stands must be recorded.

Identify Trees to Preserve. From the tree inventory, individual trees can be identified for preservation and protection during site development. In order to receive retention value, preserved trees must be a species with an average mature spread of at least 35 feet. Additional selection criteria may include tree species, size, condition, and location (Table 3.52).

Table 3.52 Selecting Priority Trees and Forests for Preservation

Selection Criteria for Tree Preservation	Examples of Priority Tree and Forests to Conserve
Species	▪ Rare, threatened, or endangered species ▪ Specimen trees ▪ High quality tree species (e.g., white oaks and sycamores because they are structurally strong and live longer than trees such as silver maple and cottonwood) ▪ Species that are tolerant of specific site conditions and soils
Size	▪ Trees over a specified diameter at breast height (d.b.h.) or other size measurement ▪ Trees designated as national, state, or local champions ▪ Contiguous forest stands of a specified minimum area
Condition	▪ Healthy trees that are structurally sound ▪ High quality forest stands with high forest structural diversity
Location	▪ Trees located where they will provide direct benefits at the site (e.g., shading, privacy, windbreak, buffer from adjacent land use) ▪ Forest stands that are connected to off-site forests that create wildlife habitat and corridors ▪ Trees located in protected natural areas such as floodplains, stream buffers, wetlands, erodible soils, critical habitat areas, and steep slopes. ▪ Forest stands that are connected to off-site non-forested natural areas or protected land (e.g., has potential to provide wildlife habitat)

Trees selected for preservation and protection must be clearly marked both on construction drawings and at the actual site. Flagging or fencing is typically used to protect trees at the construction site. Areas of trees to preserve should be marked on the site map and walked during preconstruction meetings.

Protect Trees and Soil During Construction. Physical barriers must be properly installed around the Critical Root Zone (CRZ) of trees to be preserved. The CRZ shall be determined by a licensed forester or ISA certified arborist, and in general includes a circular area with a radius (in feet) equal to 15 times the diameter of the trunk (in inches). The barriers must be maintained and enforced throughout the construction process. Tree protection barriers include highly visible, well-anchored temporary protection devices, such as 4-foot fencing, blaze orange plastic mesh fencing, or snow fencing (Greenfeld and others, 1991).

All protection devices must remain in place throughout construction

When excavation is proposed immediately adjacent to the CRZ, roots must first be pruned at the edge of the excavation with a trenching machine, vibratory knife or rock saw to a depth of 18 inches.

Protect Trees After Construction. Maintenance covenants, as described below, are required to ensure that preserved trees are protected.

3.14.2 Planting Trees

Considerations at Development Sites. New development sites provide many opportunities to plant new trees. Planting trees at development sites is done in three steps:

Step 1: Select tree species.

Step 2: Evaluate and improve planting sites.

Step 3: Plant and maintain trees.

Tree Species. In order to receive retention value, the tree species planted must have an average mature spread of at least 35 feet. Trees to be planted must be container grown, or ball and burlap, and have a minimum caliper size of 1.5 inches. Bare root trees or seedlings do not qualify for retention value.

Planting Sites. Ideal planting sites within a development are those that create interception opportunities around impervious surfaces. These include areas along pathways, roads, islands and median strips, and parking lot interiors and perimeters. Other areas of a development site may benefit from planting trees (including stream valleys and floodplains, areas adjacent to existing forest, steep slopes, and portions of the site where trees would provide buffers, screening, noise reduction, or shading).

It is important to evaluate and record the conditions, such as soil type, soil pH, soil compaction, and the hydrology of proposed planting sites to ensure they are suitable for planting. These evaluations provide a basis for species selection and determination of the need for any special site preparation techniques.

A minimum of 1,500 cubic feet of rootable soil volume must be provided per tree. In planting arrangements that allow for shared rooting space amongst multiple trees, a minimum of 1,000 cubic feet of rootable soil volume must be provided for each tree. Rootable soil volume must be within 3 feet of the surface.

Site characteristics determine what tree species will flourish there and whether any of the conditions, such as soils, can be improved through the addition of compost or other amendments. Table 3.53 presents methods for addressing common constraints to urban tree planting.

Table 3.53 Methods for Addressing Urban Planting Constraints

Potential Impact	Potential Resolution
Limited Soil Volume	▪ Provide 1,500 cubic feet of rootable soil volume per tree ▪ Use planting arrangements that allow shared rooting space. A minimum of 1.000 cubic feet of rootable soil volume must be provided for each tree in shared rooting space arrangements. ▪ Provide 1500 cubic feet of rootable soil volume per tree (this soil must be within 3 feet of the surface)
Poor Soil Quality	▪ Test soil and perform appropriate restoration ▪ Select species tolerant of soil pH, compaction, drainage, etc. ▪ Replace very poor soils if necessary
Air Pollution	Select species tolerant of air pollutants
Damage from Lawnmowers	Use mulch to protect trees
Damage from Vandalism	▪ Use tree cages or benches to protect trees ▪ Select species with inconspicuous bark or thorns ▪ Install lighting nearby to discourage vandalism
Damage from Vehicles	Provide adequate setbacks between vehicle parking stalls and trees
Damage from animals such as deer, rodents, rabbits, and other herbivores	Use protective fencing or chemical retardants
Exposure to pollutants in stormwater and snowmelt runoff	Select species that are tolerant of specific pollutants, such as salt and metals
Soil moisture extremes	▪ Select species that are tolerant of inundation or drought ▪ Install underdrains if necessary ▪ Select appropriate backfill soil and mix thoroughly with site soil ▪ Improve soil drainage with amendments and tillage if needed
Increased temperature	Select drought tolerant species
Increased wind	Select drought tolerant species
Abundant populations of invasive species	▪ Control invasive species prior to planting ▪ Continually monitor for and remove invasive species
Conflict with infrastructure	▪ Design the site to keep trees and infrastructure separate ▪ Provide appropriate setbacks from infrastructure ▪ Select appropriate species for planting near infrastructure ▪ Use alternative materials to reduce conflict
Disease or insect infestation	Select resistant species

Planting trees at development sites requires prudent species selection, a maintenance plan, and careful planning to avoid impacts from nearby infrastructure, runoff, vehicles or other urban elements.

Trees Along Streets and in Parking Lots. When considering a location for planting clear lines of sight must be provided, as well as safe travel surfaces, and overhead clearance for pedestrians and vehicles. Also, ensure enough future soil volume for healthy tree growth. At least two cubic feet of useable soil per square foot of average mature tree canopy is required. (Useable soil must be uncompacted, and may not be covered by impervious material). Having at least a 6-foot wide planting strip or locating sidewalks between the trees and street allows more rooting space for trees in adjacent property.

Select tree species that are drought tolerant, can grow in poor or compacted soils, and are tolerant to typical urban pollutants (oil and grease, metals, and chlorides). Additionally, select species that do not produce excessive fruits, nuts, or leaf litter, that have fall color, spring flowers or some other aesthetic benefit, and can be limbed up to 6 feet to provide pedestrian and vehicle traffic underneath. The District Department of Transportation, Urban Forestry Administration (DDOT UFA) provides guidance on preferred street tree species based on neighborhoods.

Planting Techniques. Prepare a hole no deeper than the root ball or mass but two to three times wider than the spread of the root ball or mass. The majority of the roots on a newly planted tree will develop in the top 12 inches of soil and spread out laterally. There are some additional considerations depending on the type of plant material being used (Table 3.54).

Table 3.54 Tree Planting Techniques

Plant Material	Planting Technique	Planting Season
Container grown	Hand plant or use mechanical planting tools (e.g., auger)	Spring or fall, summer if irrigated
Balled and burlapped	Use backhoe (or other specialized equipment) or hand plant	Spring or fall

Sources: Palone and Todd (1998), WSAHGP (2002)

One of the most important planting guidelines is too make sure the tree is not planted too deeply. The root collar, the lowest few inches of trunk just above its junction with the roots (often indicated by a flare), should be exposed (Flott, 2004). Trees planted too deeply have buried root collars, and are weakened, stressed, and predisposed to pests and disease (Flott, 2004). Trees planted too deeply can also form adventitious roots near the soil surface in an attempt to compensate for the lack of oxygen available to buried roots. Adventitious roots are not usually large enough to provide support for a large tree and may eventually lead to collapse (Flott, 2004). ISA (2005) provides additional guidance on how to avoid planting too deeply. It is generally better to plant the tree a little high, that is, with the base of the trunk flare 2 to 3 inches above the soil, rather than at or below the original growing level (ISA, 2003b).

Proper handling during planting is essential to avoid prolonged transplant shock and ensure a healthy future for new trees and shrubs. Trees should always be handled by the root ball or container, never by the trunk. Specifications for planting a tree are illustrated in Figure 3.42. Trees must be watered well after planting.

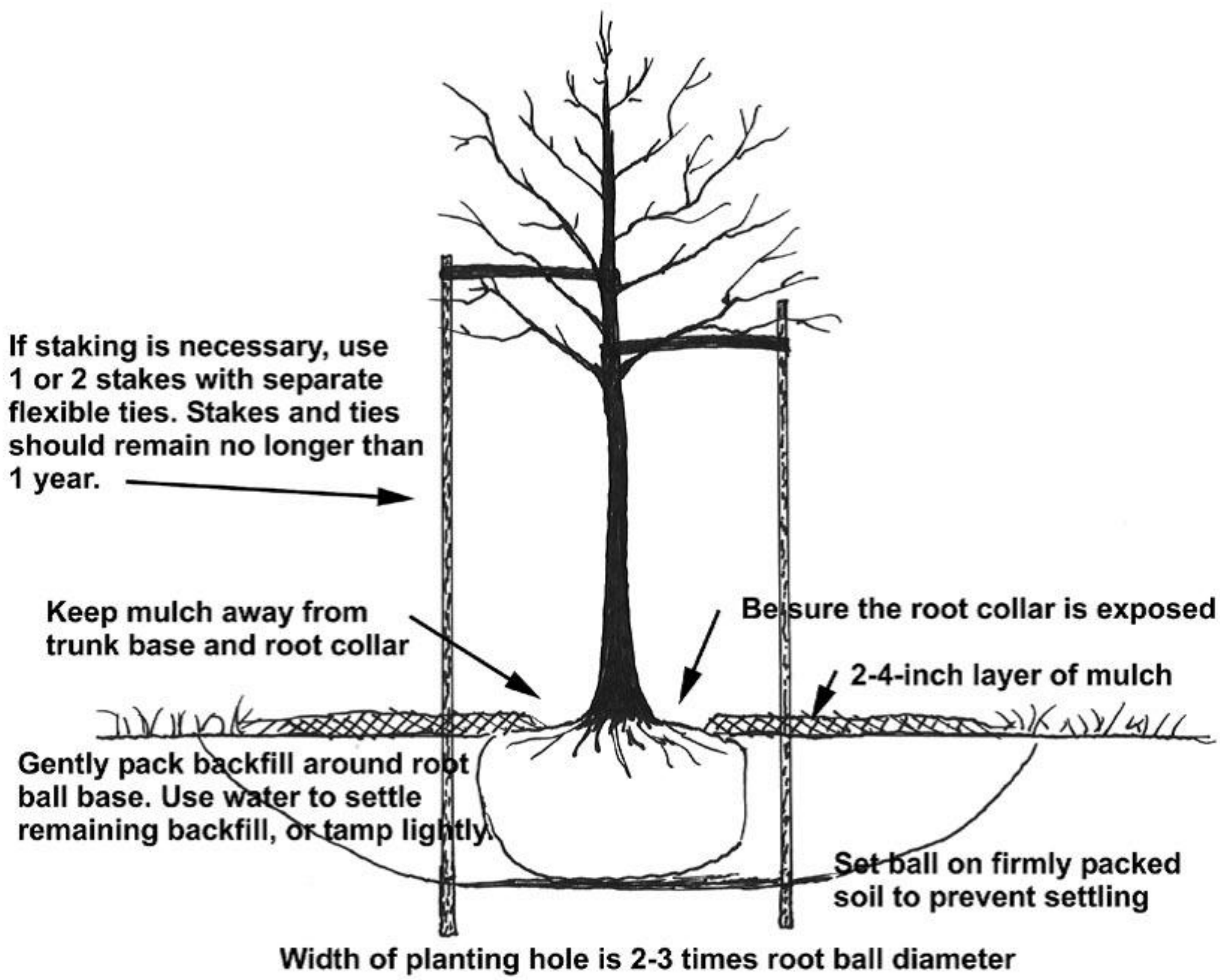

Figure 3.42 Tree planting guidelines. (Adapted from Flott, 2004 and ISA, 2003b).

Steep slopes require additional measures to ensure planting success and reduce erosion, especially if the slope receives stormwater runoff from upland land uses. Depending on the steepness of the slope and the runoff volume, rill or gully erosion may occur on these slopes, requiring a twofold approach: controlling the stormwater and stabilizing the slope.

Erosion control blankets are recommended to temporarily stabilize soil on slopes until vegetation is established (Caraco, 2000; Morrow and others, 2002). Erosion control fabrics come in a variety of weights and types, and should be combined with vegetation establishment such as seeding. Other options for stabilizing slopes include applying compost or bark mulch, plastic sheeting, or sodding (Caraco, 2000).

Trees will add stability to slopes because of their deep roots, provided they are not planted by digging rows of pits across a slope (Morrow and others, 2002). Required maintenance will include mowing (if slopes are not too steep), and establishing cover on bare or eroded areas.

Planting methods for slopes steeper than 3:1 (1 foot vertical change for every 3 horizontal feet) involve creating a level planting space on the slope (see Figure 3.43). A terrace can be dug into the slope in the shape of a step. The existing slope can be cut and the excavated soil can be used as fill. A low soil berm (or rock berm) can be formed at the front edge of each step or terrace to slow the flow of water. Trees can also be planted in clusters on slopes (using the above method) to limit potential for desiccation. Staggering tree placement and mulching will prevent water from running straight downhill.

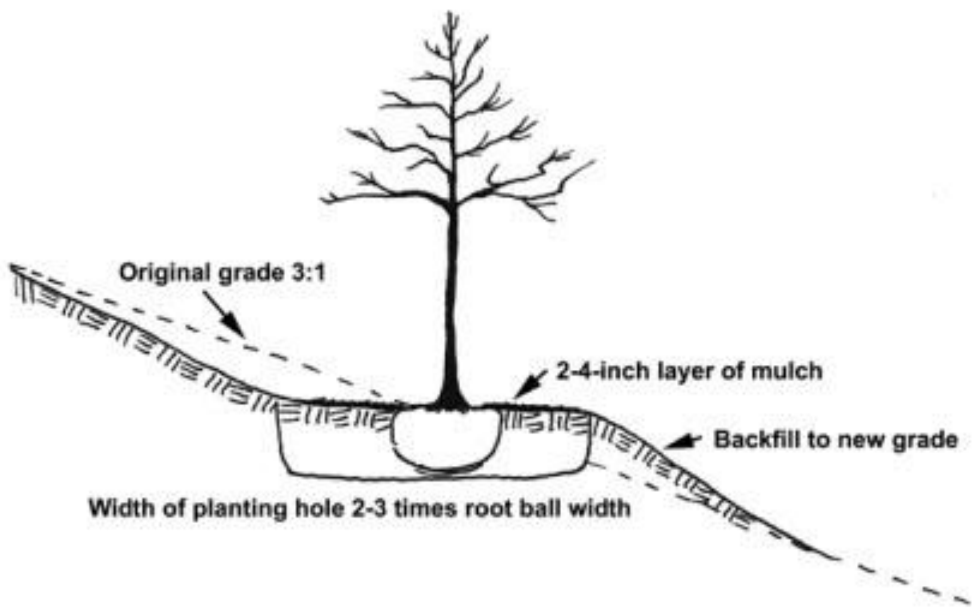

Figure 3.43 The specifications for planting on a steep slope, require creating a level planting surface.

Post-Planting Tree Protection. Once the tree has been properly planted, 2 to 4 inches of organic mulch must be spread over the soil surface out to the drip line of the tree. If planting a cluster of trees, mulch the entire planting area. Slow-decomposing organic mulches, such as shredded bark, compost, leaf mulch, or wood chips provide many added benefits for trees. Mulch that contains a combination of chips, leaves, bark, and twigs is ideal for reforestation sites. (ACB, 2000; ISA, 2003a). Grass clippings and sawdust are not recommended as mulches because they decompose rapidly and require frequent application, resulting in reduced benefits.

For well-drained sites up to 4 inches of mulch may be applied, and for poorly drained sites a thinner layer of mulch should be applied. Mulch should never be more than 4 inches deep or applied right next to the tree trunk; however, a common sight in many landscaped areas is the "mulch volcano". This over-mulching technique can cause oxygen and moisture-level problems, and decay of the living bark at the base of the tree. A mulch-free area, 2- to 3-inches wide at the base of the tree, must be provided to avoid moist bark conditions and prevent decay (ISA, 2003a).

Studies have shown that trees will establish more quickly and develop stronger trunk and root systems if they are not staked at the time of planting (ISA, 2003b). Staking for support may be necessary only for top-heavy trees or at sites where vandalism or windy exposure are a concern (Buckstrup and Bassuk, 2003; Doherty and others, 2003; ISA, 2003b).

If staking is necessary for support, two stakes used in conjunction with a wide flexible tie material will hold the tree upright, provide flexibility, and minimize injury to the trunk. To prevent damage to the root ball, stakes should be placed in undisturbed soil beyond the outer edges of the root ball. Perhaps the most important part of staking is its removal. Over time, guy wires (or other tie material) can cut into the growing trunk bark and interfere with the movement of water and nutrients within the tree. Staking material should be removed within 1 year of planting (Doherty and others, 2003).

3.14.3 Tree Inspection Criteria

An initial inspection by a qualified professional must be done to ensure the tree has been planted, watered, and protected correctly with locations flagged if appropriate. For newly planted trees, transplant shock is common and causes stress on a new tree. For this reason, newly planted trees must be inspected more frequently than established trees. The time it takes for a tree to become established varies with the size at planting, species, stock, and site conditions, but generally, trees should be inspected every few months during the first 3 years after planting, to identify problems and implement repairs or modify maintenance strategies (WSAHGP, 2002).

After the first 3 years, annual inspections are sufficient to check for problems. Trees must also be inspected after major storm events for any damage that may have occurred. The inspection should take only a few minutes per tree, but prompt action on any problems encountered results in healthier, stronger trees. Inspections should include an assessment of overall tree health, an assessment of survival rate of the species planted, cause of mortality, if maintenance is required, insect or disease problems, tree protection adjustment, and weed control condition.

DDOE's construction phase inspection checklist for tree planting and preservation can be found in Appendix K.

3.14.4 Tree Maintenance Criteria

Water newly planted trees regularly (at least once a week) during the first growing season. Water trees less frequently (about once a month) during the next two growing seasons. After three growing seasons, water trees only during drought. The exact watering frequency will vary for each tree and site.

A general horticultural rule of thumb is that trees need 1 inch of rainfall per week during the growing season (Petit and others, 1995). This means new trees need a minimum of 25 gallons of water a week to stay alive (http://caseytrees.org/get-involved/water/). Water trees deeply and slowly near the roots. Light, frequent watering of the entire plant can actually encourage roots to grow at the surface. Soaker hoses and drip irrigation work best for deep watering of trees. It is recommend that slow leak watering bags or tree buckets are installed to make watering easier and more effective. Continue watering until mid-fall, tapering off during lower temperatures.

Pruning is usually not needed for newly planted trees but may be beneficial for tree structure. If necessary, prune only dead, diseased, broken or crossing branches at planting (Doherty and others, 2003; Trowbridge and Bassuk, 2004). As the tree grows, lower branches may be pruned to provide clearance above the ground, or to remove dead or damaged limbs.

DDOE's maintenance inspection checklist for tree planting and preservation and the Maintenance Service Completion Inspection form can be found in Appendix L.

Declaration of Covenants. A maintenance covenant is required for all stormwater management practices. The covenant specifies the property owner's primary maintenance responsibilities, and authorizes DDOE staff to access the property for inspection or corrective action in the event the proper maintenance is not performed. The covenant is attached to the deed of the property (see standard form, variations exist for scenarios where stormwater crosses property lines). A template form is provided at the end of Chapter 5 (see Figure 5.4), although variations will exist for scenarios where stormwater crosses property lines. The covenant is between the property and the Government of the District of Columbia. It is submitted through the Office of the Attorney General. All SWMPs have a maintenance agreement stamp that must be signed for a building permit to proceed. There may be a maintenance schedule on the drawings themselves or the plans may refer to the maintenance schedule (Exhibit C in the covenant).

Covenants are not required on government properties, but maintenance responsibilities must be defined through a partnership agreement or a memorandum of understanding.

Waste Material. Waste material from the repair, maintenance, or removal of a BMP or land cover shall be removed and disposed of in compliance with applicable federal and District law.

3.14.5 Tree Stormwater Compliance Calculations

Trees receive retention value but they are not accepted total suspended solids (TSS) treatment practices.

To ensure appropriate stormwater benefits associated with proposed tree preservation or planting, all trees receiving retention value must be properly maintained until redevelopment of the area occurs. If trees die they must be replaced with a similar tree no longer than 6 months from time of death in an appropriate location.

Preserved trees that meet the requirements described above receive a retention value of 20 cubic feet each. Planted trees that meet the requirements described above receive a retention value of 10 cubic feet each.

Note: Trees planted as part of another BMP, such as a bioretention area, also receive the 10 cubic foot retention value. Retention values are shown in Tables 3.55 and 3.56 below.

Table 3.55 Preserved Tree Retention Value and Pollutant Removal

Retention Value	= 20*cf* (150 gallons)
Accepted TSS Treatment Practice	No

Table 3.56 Planted Tree Retention Value and Pollutant Removal

Retention Value	= 10*cf* (75 gallons)
Accepted TSS Treatment Practice	No

Trees also contribute to peak flow reduction. This contribution can be determined in several ways. One method is to subtract the retention value from the total runoff volume for the 2-year, 15-year, and 100-year storms. The resulting reduced runoff volumes can then be used to calculate a Reduced Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Curve Number for the site or drainage area. The Reduced Curve Number can then be used to calculate peak flow rates for the various storm events. Other hydrologic modeling tools that employ different procedures may be used as well.

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