

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. Who is responsible for the tree in the front of my house?

A. Trees that are in the right-of-way are managed by the Borough and are sometimes called street trees. Most trees planted between the sidewalk and curb are street trees. Some trees on the other side of the sidewalk are also in the right-of-way. If you are unsure whether a tree is in the right-of-way, contact the Department of Public Works (PDW) at 732-632-8518 or recycle@metuchen.com.

Trees not within the borough right-of-way are the homeowner's responsibility.

Q. Who do I call to request that a town tree be removed or pruned?

A. The Borough will not remove healthy trees. If you think you may have a diseased, dying or otherwise hazardous street tree, contact DPW. Hazardous trees are addressed first. Trees of less immediate concern are placed on the pruning/removal list.

Q. Do I need a permit to prune or remove a hazardous street tree at my own expense?

A. Yes, a resident must be granted a permit to prune or remove a street tree. In order to receive permission to remove a street tree, the Borough must agree that it is hazardous. To have the tree inspected and obtain a permit, homeowners should complete the [Street Tree Removal Permit Application](#) and return it to the Planning & Zoning Office (732-632-8554) at Borough Hall.

Q. The tree roots have raised the sidewalk in front of my house. What can be done?

A. Contact DPW. They will decide how best to address the issue. Please be aware that it is the responsibility of the homeowner to repair the sidewalk.

Q. How do I report a tree emergency?

A. If a tree presents an immediate life-threatening hazard, such as having fallen onto electric wires or blocking a public road, call the Metuchen Police Department. Also call your power company if a tree falls onto utility lines.

Q. Can I request that a street tree be planted in front of my house?

A. Contact the Metuchen Shade Tree Commission (STC) at shadetree@metuchen.com to request a free shade tree be planted in the right-of-way. Please include your name, address and phone number.

STC will select an appropriate tree to be planted in an appropriate spot to benefit the homeowner and enhance the Borough's tree canopy.

In selecting the tree type, STC considers many factors, including the size of the tree when fully grown, the tree's resistance to disease, its vulnerability to de-icing salt, its root structure and species diversity in the Borough. STC does not plant ornamental trees.

In selecting the right location, STC considers such factors as proximity to utility lines and other trees and whether the grassy median is large enough to accommodate the tree's growth.

Homeowners are asked to water and care for their newly planted shade tree. Once a week, the tree needs a deep watering. If you don't receive enough rain, run your hose on a slow trickle over the root area for an hour.

Q. Can I plant a shade tree myself in the Borough right-of-way?

A. Please contact the Shade Tree Committee so that we can advise you on appropriate species, the proper planting technique and care.

Q. May a memorial or commemorative tree be planted in town?

A. The Shade Tree Commission's Commemorative Trees program provides an opportunity for you or a group to sponsor a street tree to be planted in the Borough of Metuchen. Trees can be planted in memory or honor of a loved one, in celebration of a life event, or simply as a gift to the Borough by those who cherish trees.

The commemorative tree costs \$275, which includes planting, follow-up maintenance, and a name plate added to the Commemorative Plaque located inside Borough Hall.

To gift a commemorative tree, contact STC at ShadeTree@metuchen.com with your name and phone number.

Q. Can you recommend a tree to plant in my yard?

A. The Arbor Day Foundation has a good [on-line guide](#) for selecting appropriate trees. You are also welcome to call STC for a recommendation.

Q. How deep should the mulch be around my trees?

A. Mulch around a tree should be spread like a donut, not a volcano. Never allow mulch to touch the tree's bark, and never pile it higher than 3-4 inches. Mulch too deep decreases the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide, which can lead to fungal and bacterial diseases. It is best to mulch with wood chips or other coarse organic material.

Q. How do I find a tree specialist?

A. STC cannot recommend one tree company over another, but it does recommend that you solicit more than one estimate prior to hiring a company. You should ask any certified arborist for the following information:

- Proof of I.S.A. (International Society of Arboriculture) certification and licensing by the Contractors State License Board.
- Assurance that the arborist will be using ANSI A300 Pruning Standards and ANSI Z133 Safety Requirements and will not use climbing spurs.
- A certificate of insurance that includes liability coverage for property damage as well as workers compensation insurance for all employees.
- A detailed written estimate.