



VOLUNTEER'S ROLE AND TREE CARE AGREEMENT

Congratulations on your new tree! After planting, you will need to care for your young tree in order for it to become established and thrive. A city tree must battle many urban hazards daily — from air pollution and bicycles to dogs and people. In addition to above ground threats, tree roots also must contend with tough below-ground conditions.

Because of this, *it is essential to create as nurturing an environment as possible.*

ABOUT YOUR TREE

How big is my new tree? 1.5 - 2 caliper inch. Trees at this age are measured by caliper, or width of the trunk. Shade trees arriving to be planted will be approximately six to twelve feet tall. If wires or size limiting obstructions are present, your tree will be a tree with smaller stature at maturity.

What type of tree will I receive? Openlands selects from a **diverse list** of urban appropriate trees available from the nurseries. A landscape composed of diverse trees is more resilient.



WATERING

Watering is the MOST important thing you can do for your new tree! Watering trees during the first few years will help guarantee that your tree will grow to maturity. Due to compaction and pollution, urban soil is hydrophobic and difficult to penetrate.

- Water each young tree with **15 - 20 gallons once a week** between May and October. That's three to four large buckets.
- Water **slowly** so the water penetrates the soil and does not run off.



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WEEDING AND MULCHING

Street trees live in very small spaces that provide limited amounts of soil and nutrients. Mulch is simply organic matter applied in a ring around the tree and is the best way to keep your tree protected and healthy. Mulch acts as a blanket to hold moisture, moderate soil temperature extremes, and reduce competition from turf grass and weeds.

Remove turf grass and weeds. When removing the weeds, take out the entire root system. Leaving behind some of the plant material will allow for the weed to grow back.

Mulch in a donut shape around the tree using shredded bark, shredded leaves, or composted wood chips.

- Three to four inches in height of mulch is ideal. More than four inches may cause a problem with oxygen and limiting moisture to the tree roots.
- Tree trunk should NOT touch the mulch. When placing mulch, be sure that the actual trunk of the tree is not covered. Doing so may cause decay of the living bark at the base of the tree. A mulch-free area, two to three inches wide at the base of the tree, is sufficient to avoid moist bark conditions and prevent decay.

Keep dogs and dog waste (both liquid and solid) out of the tree bed. The waste will overwhelm a tree and burn its roots. A tree that is cared for is respected.

MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

Follow this maintenance schedule for the life of your tree. Detailed instructions are on the pages indicated in parentheses.

Type of Care	Timeline			
	At planting	Years 1 to 3	Years 4 to 10	After 10 years
Water (p. 13)	5 gallons	Correct amount is <i>critical</i> from spring through autumn →	As needed from spring through autumn →	
Mulch (p. 16)	2-4 inches deep, not against trunk	Check and adjust level in spring →		
Protect Trunk (p. 14)	As needed →	Check in spring and autumn →		N/A
Stake (p. 11)	Only if needed →	Check in spring and autumn. Remove after 1-2 years.	N/A	N/A
Clean Root Collar (p. 15)	N/A	Clean root collar every year →		
Check for Encircling Roots (p. 9, 15)	Check before planting (p. 9)	N/A	Check every 4-5 years (p. 15) →	
Check Health (p. 17, 35)	Select a healthy tree (p. 35)	Inspect leaves, branches, crown and trunk every year (p. 17) →		
Check Safety (p. 17)	N/A	Inspect in summer, winter, and after storms (p. 17) →		
Prune* (p. 7, 18-23)	Prune only critical branches or to eliminate extra leaders (p. 7)	Prune lightly in Year 2 or 3 (p. 18-23)	Every 3 years	Fruit trees every 1-3 years, deciduous shade trees every 5 years, evergreens only as needed

*For some tree types, pruning or removal during spring and summer requires special care to prevent disease transmission. See p. 20 for details.

This chart and additional tree care information can be found at www.treeownersmanual.info courtesy of the US Forest Service.

AGREEMENT

Pre-planting day. Someone in your household will need to provide their name, phone number, and agree to care for a tree during its establishment period (three years).

Planting day. At least one person in your household will need to help plant trees from 9am – 1pm. The idea is to create an event where neighbors work together to help each other out. Connected neighbors have more resilient communities.



Establishment. After planting, you will need to care for your young tree in order for it to become established and thrive.

Cost share donation. If you are able to cost share and donate \$100 per tree, this will free up more funds to plant trees in Chicago with residents who do not have the resources. **This is optional.**

PLEASE SIGN THIS FORM

I have read this volunteer and tree care agreement. I am responsible for the care of this tree(s) for the next three years to ensure healthy establishment.

Signature

Printed name

Address

Date signed

** It is important to remember that a tree is not guaranteed to be planted until it is finally planted in the ground. Possible issues can concern utilities, electric lines, light and traffic signs, old stumps, or standing dead trees. Trees that die will not be replaced unless it was a problem with the nursery stock.*

Founded in 1963, Openlands is one of the nation's oldest and most successful metropolitan conservation organizations, having helped secure, protect, and provide public access to more than 55,000 acres of land for parks, forest preserves, wildlife refuges, land and water greenway corridors, and urban gardens. For more information, please visit [Openlands.org](https://openlands.org).

