

## Planting trees and shrubs near county roads

This brochure is designed to provide tree-planting guidelines for people who own property along roads maintained by the Kalamazoo County Road Commission.

The state and the municipal governments have their own specific requirements for roads under their jurisdictions. Call the Road Commission before planting if you are not sure which agency is responsible for your road.

Use of the guidelines cited in this brochure will have a long-term positive impact on the county road system. Trees and shrubs will be planted in the best site possible and will have a better chance of growing to maturity and making a significant contribution to environmental improvement. Road maintenance costs will be reduced, substantially saving tax dollars over the tree or shrub's lifetime.

### For more information

This brochure has been prepared to provide information about planting trees and shrubs near county roads. If you have further questions or concerns, we invite you to call us or visit our offices between 7:30 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.

All programs, activities and services are provided equally without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin or handicap.



3801 East Kilgore Road  
Kalamazoo, MI 49001  
Telephone: (269) 381-3171  
Fax: (269) 381-1760  
[www.kalamazoocountyroads.com](http://www.kalamazoocountyroads.com)

## Guidelines for Planting

# TREES AND SHRUBS

Near Roads  
Maintained  
by the  
**Kalamazoo County  
Road Commission**



**(269) 381-3171**

## Why are tree planting guidelines necessary?

Kalamazoo County is a growing and diverse area with thousands of trees of different varieties, shapes and sizes near county roads.

Although trees add beauty, color and character to our roadsides, if they are too close to the road edge, they can be both hazardous and a potential liability for property owners, utilities, and the Road Commission.

Use of our guidelines can help you choose the right tree for the right place, which, in turn, can improve the likelihood of tree survival and reduce maintenance as the tree grows to maturity.

## Where should trees and shrubs be planted?

Before planting

### 1. PLAN

Consider your goals. Why are you planting? To screen a view, reduce noise, enhance beauty or property value, or for some other reason?

### 2. CONSIDER SITE CONDITIONS

Are there overhead or underground utilities? Is the site near a sidewalk or driveway? Take into consideration soil conditions, soil drainage and likely road maintenance activities, such as snow removal, salt runoff, ditching, brush control and water drainage. Also consider the mature width of the tree and its impact on the road right-of-way and motorist safety.

### 3. CONSIDER THE TREE OR SHRUB ITSELF

Estimate the amount of space available for the tree or shrub to grow in, not only above ground, but also below ground. Think about the tree's mature size and shape. Tree roots expand beyond a tree's drip line and should not be too close to sidewalks, roads, buildings, driveways or areas of compacted soil.

## What kind of native trees should we plant?

To help diversity, plant a tree that is a different species from those nearby. There are many suitable native trees that are available to plant.

| SOME SUGGESTED TREE SPECIES | SIZE   | MATURE HEIGHT (IN FEET) | MATURE WIDTH (IN FEET) |
|-----------------------------|--------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Flowering crabapple         | Small  | 10-35                   | 10-25                  |
| Washington hawthorne        | Small  | 15-35                   | 10-35                  |
| Ironwood                    | Medium | 35-45                   | 25-35                  |
| Tulip tree                  | Large  | 50-75                   | 30-70                  |
| Sugar maple                 | Large  | 60-80                   | 40-70                  |
| Black tupelo                | Large  | 40-80                   | 40-70                  |
| Red oak                     | Large  | 60-80                   | 45-65                  |
| White spruce                | Large  | 50-70                   | 30-40                  |
| White pine                  | Large  | 50-80                   | 30-40                  |

Some trees can be planted in groupings—similar to a park setting. These groupings should be well away from the road edge, and the trees should be adequately spaced to not crowd each other.

## STATE LAW REQUIRES THAT YOU CALL MISS DIG AT 1-800-482-7171

at least three full working days before you dig so that underground cables or equipment can be staked so you will not interfere with them. There is no charge for this service.



Many potential planting sites for trees are unsuitable because of power lines, existing trees or other space restrictions. Such areas may be better suited for a variety of shrubbery that has a smaller mature height and width than trees.

| AVERAGE MATURE SHRUB SIZES | HEIGHT (IN FEET) | WIDTH (IN FEET) |
|----------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Pyramidal arborvitae       | 20               | 4-6             |
| Dwarf burning bush         | 5-6              | 5-6             |
| Forsythia                  | 7-9              | 7-9             |
| Common purple lilac        | 8-10             | 5-10            |
| Potentilla                 | 3-4              | 3               |

## Typical road with 66-foot right-of-way and well-spaced trees

