

Planting in the Right-Of-Way

“Street trees,” typically grown in the City Right-Of-Way (ROW) improve a neighborhood’s curbside appearance and help provide a healthy local environment by producing oxygen, removing carbon dioxide and air contaminants, and providing habitat for birds and other wildlife. Their shade can substantially help to cool homes in the summer, and as a windbreak, can conserve energy used for heating.

What is the City Right-Of-Way (ROW)?

The City Right-Of-Way (ROW) is intended for the movement of the public, including public utilities as defined by City Code 16-1A. The City ROW typically includes the sidewalk and grassy area between the street and sidewalk, and is owned by the City, but maintained by the abutting property owners, with the exception of tree maintenance (City Code: 16-1A).



ROW planting guidelines

Trees

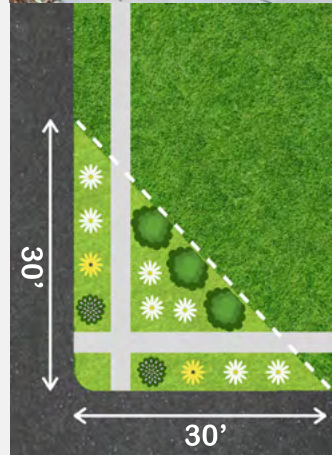
Planting a tree within the ROW requires a permit, which can be obtained by contacting the Forestry Division at icgov.org/tree-planting or at **319-356-5100**.

Flowers and shrubs

Flowers and shrubs may be planted in the ROW provided they do not grow taller than 4 feet above the curb height and are contained 1 foot inside the sidewalk edge and 1 foot inside the street curb edge. For example, if you have a six-foot-wide grass ROW, one foot in on any edge will allow you a four-foot-wide planting area in the center (City Code: 14-5F).

Planting near a vision triangle

At the intersection of two roads, planted vegetation must be kept under 2-feet high in the vision triangle, which is 30-foot back from the point where the street curb edges intersect (or for arterial roads, where the ROW edges intersect). Outside of the vision triangle, vegetation must be kept under 4-feet tall (City Code: 14-5D), to avoid the obstruction of vision for travelers.



Frequently asked questions...



What if there has been a complaint about what I've planted in the ROW?

A staff member from Housing Inspection Services will visit the area to inspect and determine if the plantings violate any of the outlined requirements.



Should I be concerned about utilities when planting in the ROW?

Yes. Before digging or planting, you are required to contact Iowa One Call at 811 (1-800-292-8989) to locate utilities. You can reach them 24/7. It is important to be mindful of underground and overhead utilities when planting in the ROW. Overhead utilities may prevent planting a tree or can limit planting to smaller ornamental varieties. Be aware when planting, that any damage to privately planted vegetation that occurs during repair and maintenance of City utilities is at the expense of the home owner.



Who is responsible for maintaining the ROW?

The Forestry Division cares for and maintains the trees within the ROW. This means the City is responsible for pruning and longer-term maintenance of all ROW trees, but does not water the tree during its establishment. The City has the authority to remove/prune any ROW tree at any time necessary. Abutting property owners are responsible for mowing and keeping the ROW in a safe condition, free from defects, debris, nuisances, obstructions, or any other hazard (City Code: 16-1A).



If you have questions about planting trees or other vegetation in the City ROW, please visit icgov.org/tree-planting, or contact Iowa City Housing & Inspections staff at **319-356-5135**.

Before you dig.

Contact Iowa One Call to locate any public underground lines at **811** or iowaonecall.com.

