

LEXINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS, TREE PLANTING IN 2011

By Anne Senning

Total trees planted

In the Spring and Fall of 2011, the Town planted 102 trees on streets, in parks and in setback areas throughout Lexington. Some of the tree species included were Honeylocust 'Shademaster', Linden 'Greenspire', Scarlet Oak, American Linden 'Redmond', Tree Lilac 'Ivory Silk', Tuliptree, Kentucky Coffeetree, and Silverbell. The majority of these trees came from the Town's Tree Nursery. They are intended to replace trees that have been removed through attrition, or to add to the tree canopy through the tree setback planting program.

Mapping planting areas

A possible tree planting site is first identified from the mapping previously done by volunteers and interns with the GPS-based Lexington Tree Inventory. The Inventory's goal was to find the best areas where new street trees could thrive as well as contribute to the beauty of Lexington. The Tree Committee then made a detailed map of each possible planting area.

In the Town Tree Nursery, each tree has a tag with its scientific and common names, its planting date and a unique identifying number, which ties it into the Town Tree Committee's database. Each tree is then matched with a specific site that is appropriate for its size and cultural requirements.

Street tree planting

Street tree planting is done in planting areas, sometimes called 'berms' or 'grass strips'. This is the strip of land owned by the Town (the Right of Way or ROW) between the sidewalk and the curb, or in the town ROW on a lawn where there is no sidewalk. A planting area must be at least 4' wide and 4' long or longer, not near corners, curb cuts or signs, and not under overhead wires.

Preparation for planting

Lexington's Tree Warden approves each site and marks it with a stake for review by Dig Safe®. Dig Safe® is a free service, underwritten by utility companies, that reviews any site where mechanical excavation is planned. Dig Safe® coordinates inspections by the utilities to reveal any underground wires, gas, sewer, or water lines at the proposed site. This complies with state law and provides for safe tree planting.

Setback trees

A setback tree is planted in a front yard on private property, beyond the Town-owned land and sidewalk. It becomes the homeowner's responsibility and property. The Town's interest in providing this service is that the tree is still available for view and shade as a public amenity, and that planting conditions are often much better in a landscaped yard rather than in the berm/grass strip, so the tree grows larger and healthier. A map is made

of the property in order to locate the tree accurately for Dig Safe® review, and the Town maintains the tree for the first year.

The recipients of setback trees (or “front yard trees”) are allotted trees on a first-come first-served basis. A homeowner can call the DPW to request a place on the waiting list.

Spring and Fall planting

Members of the Department of Public Works, Forestry Division, harvested 29 trees from the town Tree Nursery. Additional trees were donated and others were salvaged from construction. 11 trees were planted in parks, 14 were planted as street trees, two were planted in the schools, and ten were planted as setback (front-yard) trees.

In the Fall, the Town harvested 65 trees from the Tree Nursery, and sub-contracted Matthew R Foti Landscape Associates to plant 45 street trees and park trees. The Forestry Division planted the remaining 20 trees as setback trees.