Coping with Tree Problems





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Introduction

As the Waterford Lakes ecosystem matures, small trees that the developers planted are becoming large tree, causing problems to paved areas and underground pipes. This document is part of a set of pamphlets offering suggestions about avoiding problems with new trees and coping with problems from existing trees. The pamphlets describe:

- Selecting and Locating a Tree
- How to Plant the Tree
- Coping with Tree Problems

Disclaimer

The information contained in this document is based on advice from tree experts and is presented in good faith and believed to be correct, but it is General in nature and should never be used as a substitute for paid advice from a qualified professional such as an arborist. All information in this document is provided "as is" without warranties, representations, or guarantees of any kind.

The Waterford Lakes Long Range Planning Committee developed this document and is solely responsible for its content. Recommendations made in this document are those of the Committee, and do not represent official positions of the Waterford Lakes Community Association or its Architectural Review Committee.

Coping with Tree Problems

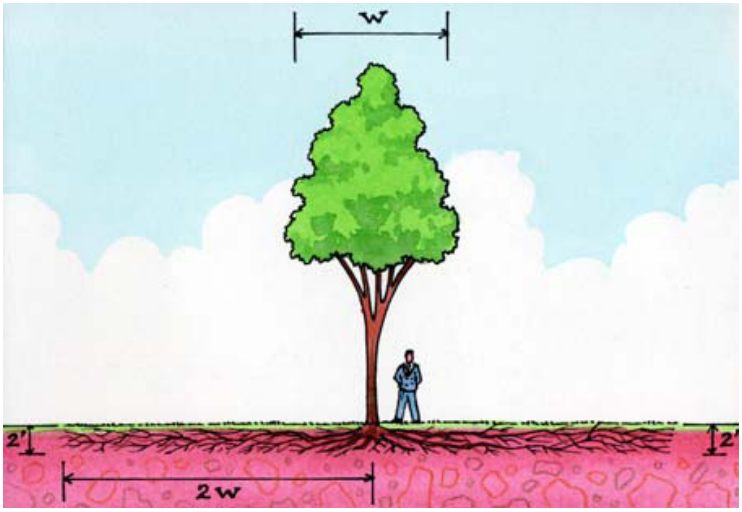
Property owners have four major complaints about street trees:

- Tree roots lift sidewalks
- Tree roots sometimes get into sewer lines
- Trees drop leaves which must be raked and occasionally cleaned out of gutters
- Trees sometimes drop "sap" that falls on cars and attracts bees



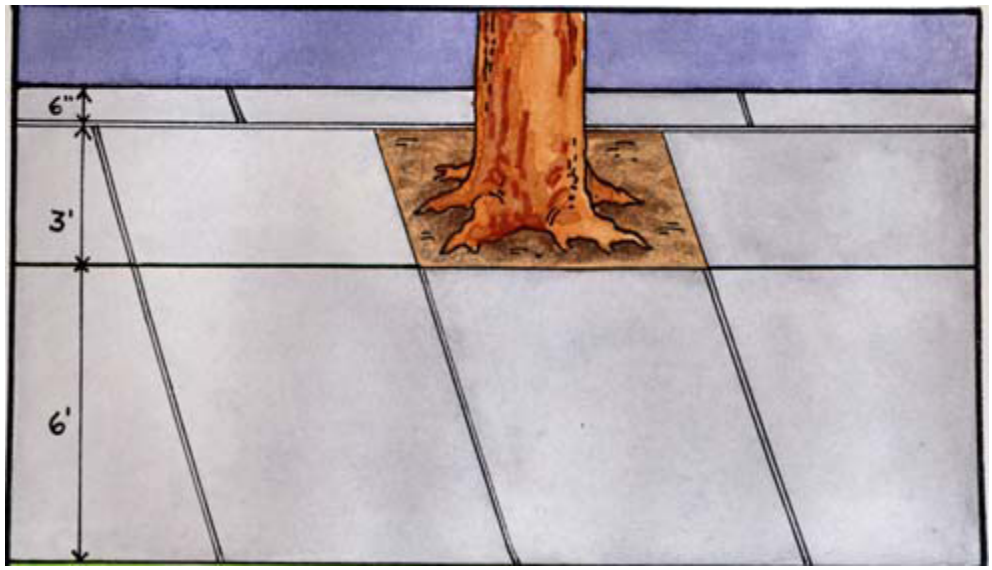
Lifted sidewalks

Tree roots extended a great distance laterally – twice the width of the tree canopy – but they are very shallow. About 90% of a tree's roots are within the top 30 inches of soil. That means they sometimes lift sidewalks.



Best sidewalk solution: enlarge tree pit

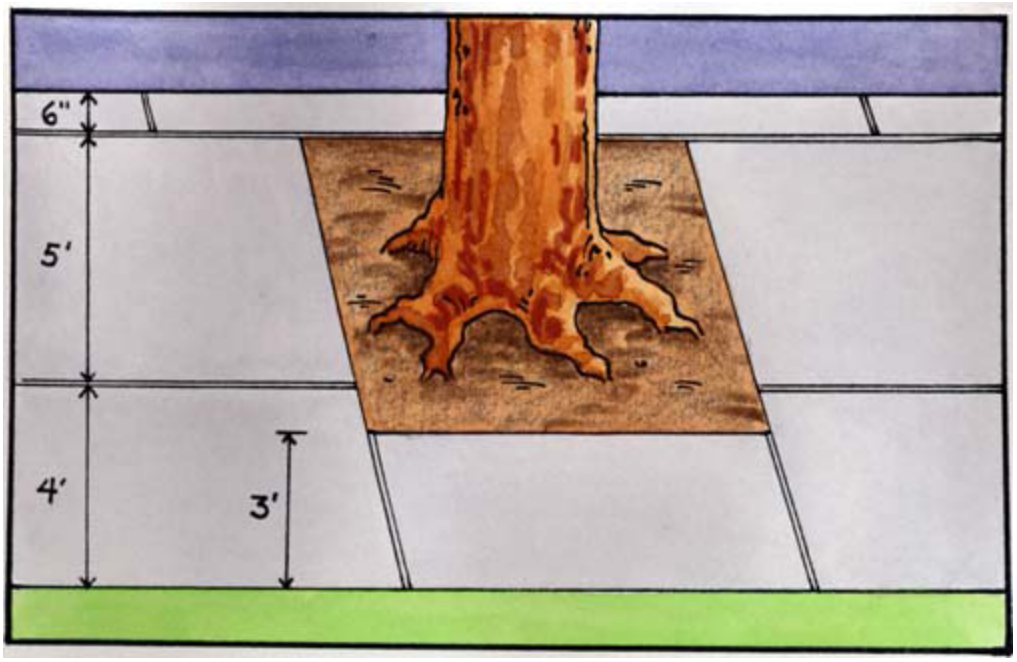
The tree pit is the area removed from a sidewalk for the tree. The larger the tree pit, the healthier the tree will be and the less likely it is that sidewalks will be lifted.



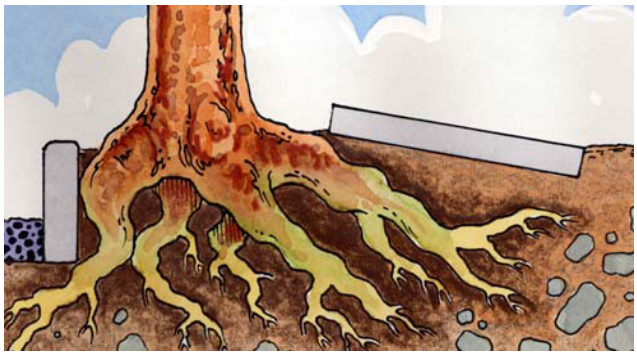
This tree pit is too small.



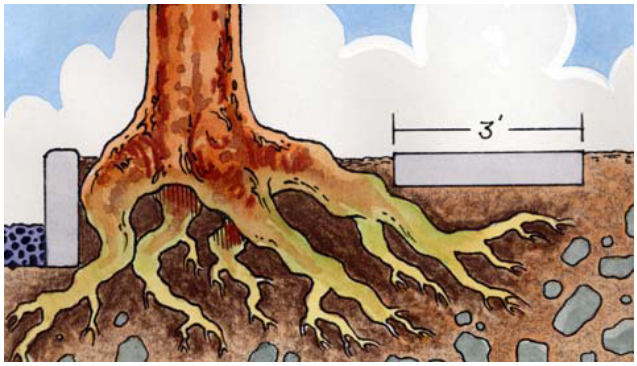
Tree pits can be expanded by removing excess concrete to form a planting strip to allow tree roots space to grow and reduce the chance of a lifted sidewalk. It also allows rain to permeate the ground.



If necessary, sidewalks can be reduced to 3 feet wide.



When tree roots lift a sidewalk, the best solution is ...

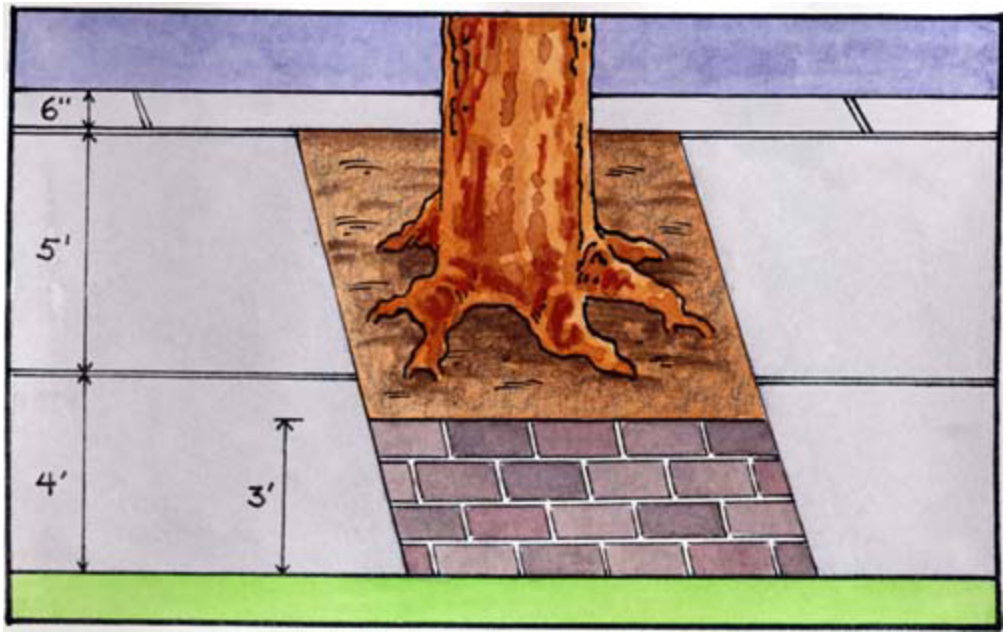


...to reduce the width of the sidewalk.

Enlarging the tree pit

If you have room...

If you are installing a new sidewalk, you can go around a tree, or create a large tree pit covered with bricks that can be removed as the tree grows.

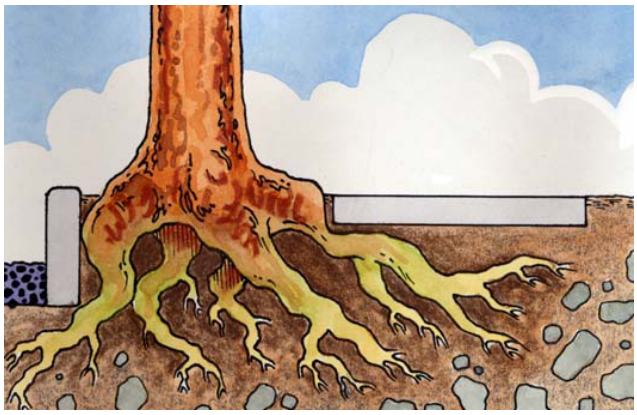


Brick can provide a walking surface around the tree.

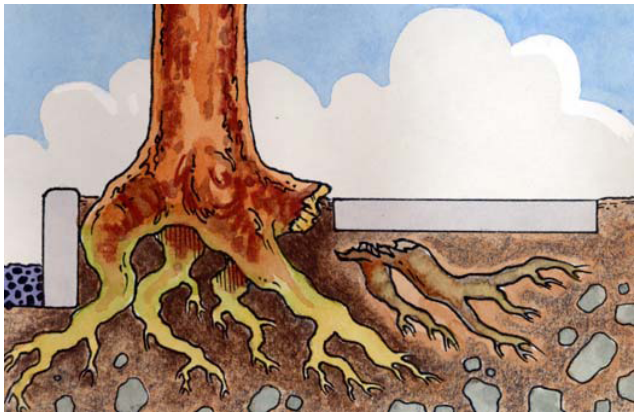
If you don't have room…

If you don't have room to go around tree roots, you can "shave" the roots with a hatchet by removing small roots and notching large ones about 3 inches below ground level to allow room for a new sidewalk over the roots.

But don't sever the root! You will kill or destabilize the tree!



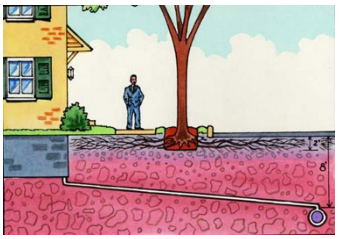
When pouring a new sidewalk, you can shave down large roots with a hatchet or root grinder to allow 3 inches for pouring concrete or putting down bricks.



Don't sever big roots! You could kill the tree, or destabilize the tree so it might fall over in high winds or a storm. 8

Defective sewer lines

Tree roots will not penetrate a sound sewer line. If tree roots enter a sewer line, it is because the pipe is faulty. When a sewer pipe breaks or leaks because of age or improper installation, nutrients and water ooze into the surrounding soil. This will attract any nearby roots, which will thrive and may even enter the defective pipe and block the passage.



90% of a tree's roots grow in the top 30 inches of soil, well above sewer pipes, which are generally buried 6 feet or more below the surface.

Even so, the only way tree roots can enter a sewer pipe is if there is a break or leak in the pipe, just as the only way rain can enter a building is through a leaky roof.

Remember, if your tree is going to grow 30-40’ tall and 30-40’ in diameter you may want to rethink where you would want to plant your tree.