



TREES & SEWER PIPES

This handout is to help educate homeowners about sewer and pipe repairs adjacent to curbside trees. The goal is to minimize any negative impact to the tree while resolving issues with sewers. We recognize that sewer problems are a traumatic and expensive problem that homeowners face when tree roots are found to be growing in sewer pipes and causing a blockage.

There are many myths about how roots enter a pipe. The truth is that tree roots only grow where they can find oxygen, water and nutrients and are typically located in the top 12-18 inches of soil depending on the tree species, soil type and drainage. This is not the same depth as most sewer lines, which can be up to 4ft underground.

If a sewer pipe is defective, the roots may thrive due to an increase of nutrients and water leaching into the soil. As these roots grow and go deeper into the rich soil, they may eventually enter the defective pipe and cause a blockage. Roots rarely enter water lines because these pipes are typically made of cast iron and are screwed together, minimizing the chance of leakage. Sewer lines are usually made of clay tiles that are glued together. This type of pipe is fragile and prone to cracks as the glue dries and the soil settles.

How to prevent problems:

- Ensure proper construction of new sewer lines, including tight joints and a firm compacted soil base, so it will settle evenly.
- Repair or replace defective sewers. Repeated problems may indicate a collapsed or badly damaged pipe. Contact the Department of Public Works at 201-599-6275 about issues with tree roots and sewers. We will come and evaluate the current condition of the tree. If the tree is in good condition, the recommendation to the homeowner will be to seek out repair of their sewer pipe. Removing a tree will not solve a faulty sewer pipe issue, as the roots of the removed tree will continue to grow after the tree has been removed.

**Please consult with the Department of Public Works if you have any sewer concerns about a Borough tree.
There is no fee for consultations.**

**** Please note the Shade Tree Advisory Committee selects species of trees that do not have typical rapid growth to minimize future conflicts.***