

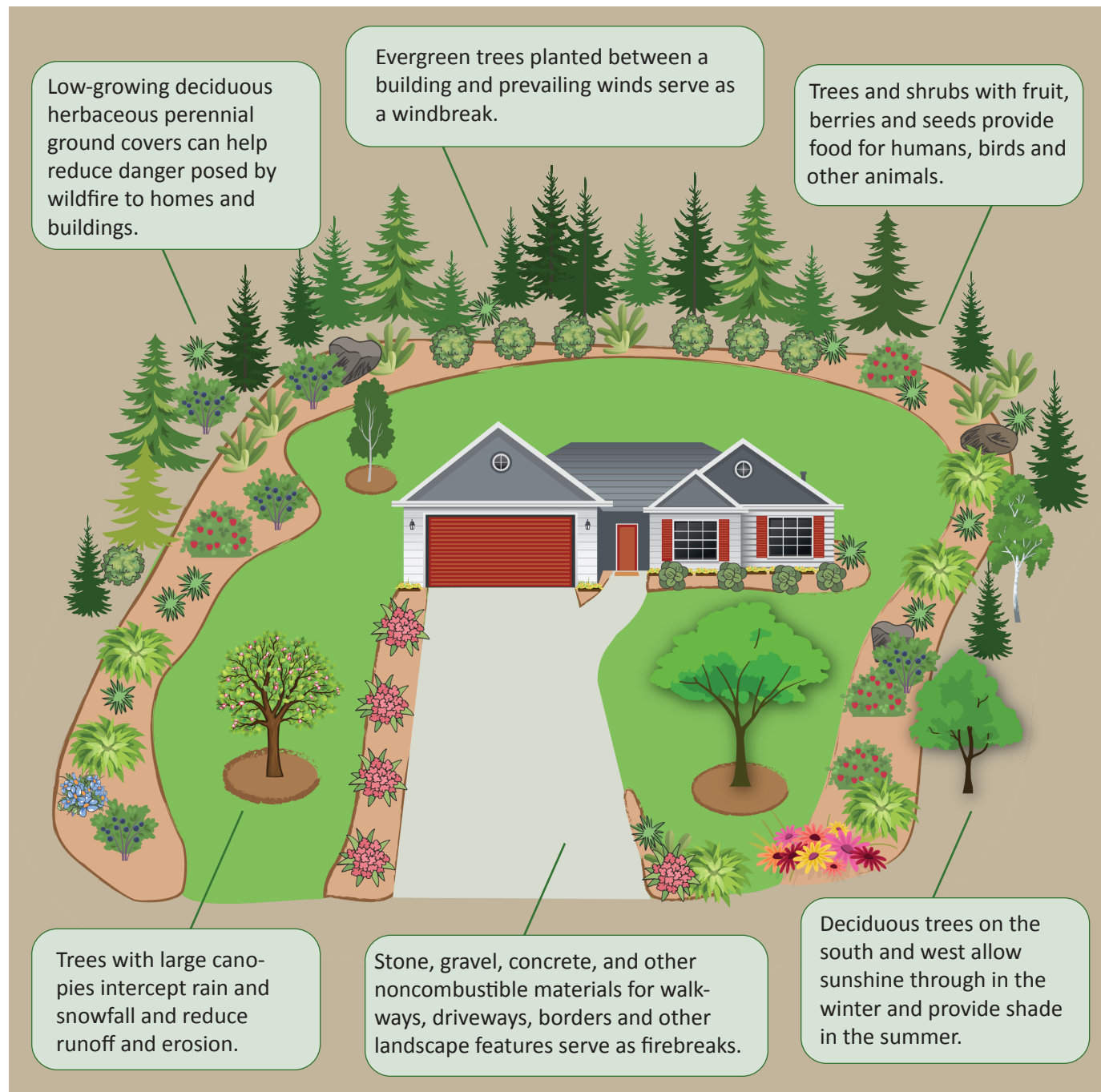
# Plant A Tree: An Alaska Guide to Tree Care



COOPERATIVE  
EXTENSION SERVICE  
HGA-00437A

## Select the right tree for the right place

Consider soil conditions, exposure to sun and wind, human activity, drainage, hardiness zone and space constraints. Most tree roots grow in the top 4-18 inches of soil and extend far beyond the drip line up to five times the height of the tree. How much space will your tree need above and below ground when it is mature? Remember that the width of the mature tree is as important as the height when considering location.



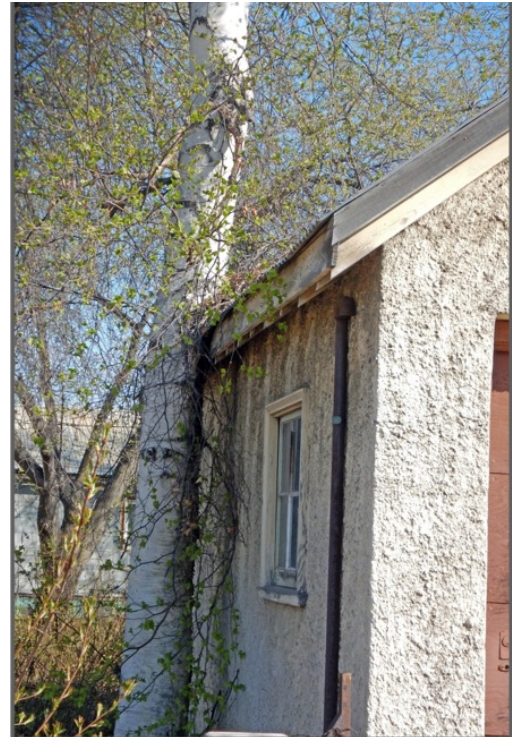
For mature heights of trees in Alaska, see [www.alaskaplants.org](http://www.alaskaplants.org)

# Avoid sites where your tree will cause problems or be damaged

## Locate trees:

- At least 15 feet away from buildings to avoid fire and damage to trees or building;
- To keep good views open and to block undesirable views;
- To provide shade where you want it or keep sunny spaces open;
- Away from roofs with sliding snow;
- With your neighbors in mind;
- Along streets to improve property values and neighborhood aesthetics;
- To provide needed space for root and crown development – some trees prefer to be close to other trees (birch, cottonwood, alder), while others (spruce, maple) need lots of room;
- To avoid obstructing sightlines and traffic signs at intersections and driveways;
- To give trees space and the right amount of soil to reach mature size without damage to driveways or sidewalks.

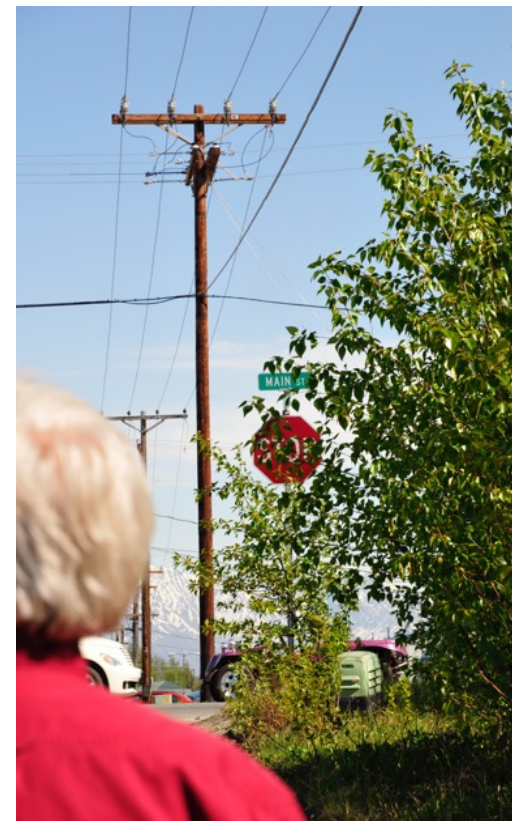
Avoid planting trees that will attract wildlife near building accesses, school bus stops and peopled pathways.



**Plant trees at least 15 feet away from buildings.**



**Avoid planting trees where they interfere with power lines.**



**Avoid planting trees where they would obstruct traffic signs.**

**Provide permeable surfaces around trees – give them space and the right amount of soil.**



# Trees and utilities need space

If planted in the wrong location, trees can interfere with the safety and reliability of the utilities many use every day. Underground utilities may include electric wires, coaxial telecommunication cables, water pipes, sewer and drainage pipes, septic systems and leach fields, which can all be adversely impacted by tree roots. Problems can be avoided by planting the right tree in the right place. Poorly placed trees can interfere with underground and aerial utilities in several ways, including:

- Growing up (vertically) into powerlines
- Growing outward (laterally) into powerlines
- Growing roots into underground powerlines
- Growing in a way that blocks access for utility workers

To determine a location for planting trees so that they do not interfere with utilities, consider the characteristics of both the plant AND the site.

## General guidelines for tree planting near utilities

### Zone 3

**(20 feet or more from utility pole)**

Trees planted in this zone should progress from medium (10 to 24 feet) to large (25 feet and taller) the farther you get from the utilities. This helps keep powerlines safe and reliable should a tree in this zone fall.

Plant trees like Colorado blue spruce, Norway maple, birch



### Zone 2

**(10 to 20 feet from utility pole)**

Trees planted in this zone should be small (up to 10 feet at maturity). Planting shorter trees in this area will reduce the need for future pruning.

Plant shrubs like juniper, red twig, dogwood, lilac, spirea, Nanking cherry

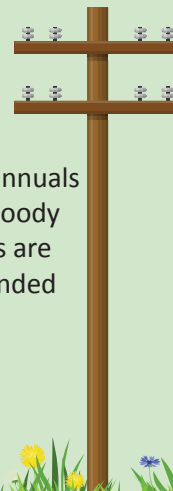


### Zone 1

**Full width of utility easement/right of way (within 10 feet of utility pole)**

Keep this area free of trees and vegetation that may block access. Usually, this area encompasses the full width of the utility easement/right of way.

Grasses, annuals and nonwoody perennials are recommended



# Trees and utilities need space

## Plant characteristics:

- What will this plant be like at maturity?
- How tall will it be?
- How wide will it be?
- Is the plant shade-tolerant or sun-loving?
- Does the plant produce fruit or seeds?

## Location (site) characteristics:

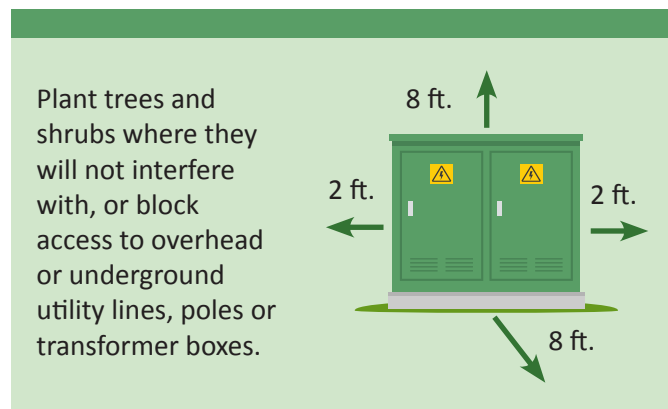
- Are there any utilities located on the property?
- If so, what are the easement/right of way widths for these utilities?
- Does the utility have any requirements concerning vegetation in this space?
- What is the topography/terrain like?

## Is this the right tree for the right place?

- Will the tree interfere with utilities today if it's planted in this location?
  - » Will it block access for utility personnel?
  - » Will it obscure utility equipment or prevent the utility from being able to safely work?

- Will the tree interfere with utilities in the future if it is planted in this location?
  - » Is the species capable of growing up (vertically) into the utilities?
  - » Is the species capable of growing out (laterally) into the utilities?
  - » Is the species capable of blocking access as it grows?

The safest route is to err on the side of caution by not planting any trees within a utility easement. Some utilities may consider grasses, flowers and select low-growing shrubs to be compatible with the space, but always check with your utility provider before planting anything within an easement.



[www.uaf.edu/ces](http://www.uaf.edu/ces) or 1-877-520-5211/907-474-5211

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