



PUBLIC
AWARENESS
CAMPAIGN

SIDEWALK LANDSCAPING PERMIT INFORMATION

(January 2008 translation by Amber Hasselbring approved by the San Francisco Department of Public Works Bureau of Urban Forestry)

The Sidewalk Landscaping Permit, made available in 2006 by the City of San Francisco, encourages residents to replace portions of sidewalk with gardens. However, a permit is required to ensure that sidewalk gardens are constructed and maintained in order to maximize environmental benefits, to assure public safety and not to interfere with the city's water, sewer and electricity flows.

Building sidewalk gardens creates an opportunity for communities to cooperate with each other in improving the local ecology. Sidewalk gardens soften the urban landscape by adding wildlife habitat. Additionally, garden soil collects and filters rainwater. Presently during heavy rains, storm drains collect rainwater into the city's water treatment system, and sewage overflows into the bay.

Permit Materials:

- [] Application form signed by the property owner or owner's agent. If you are renting, talk to the property owner about the benefits of sidewalk landscaping.
- [] Simple sidewalk landscaping drawing. For sample drawings, contact the Bureau of Urban Forestry at 415-641-2676, and leave a message for Maria d'Agostino.
- [] Non-refundable check written to CCSF-DPW- BUREAU OF URBAN FORESTRY for \$215 per property if submitted individually, \$185 for two to four neighbors or \$160 for five or more neighbors on the same block or intersection. Inviting your neighbors to join in the process reduces fees, demolition and installation costs.

Mail Materials to:

City and County of San Francisco
Department of Public Works
Bureau of Urban Forestry
Attn: Sidewalk Landscaping Permit
2323 Cesar Chavez Street
San Francisco, CA 94124

Permitting & Construction:

- Call the Bureau of Urban Forestry at 415-641-2676, two weeks before beginning sidewalk demolition to schedule a site inspection. Attend the inspection. At the inspection, staff will approve the permit or notify you of any necessary changes.
- Call Underground Service Alert at 800-227-2600 two days before beginning sidewalk demolition to identify the locations of underground utilities.
- Cut the concrete with a concrete saw and break it into pieces with a jackhammer. This material may be hauled away and recycled into new concrete.
- Remove any large rocks from the soil, and consider using them in the garden as landscaping features. Fill the sidewalk garden with a mixture of fresh soil and existing soil.
- Install drought tolerant plants and landscaping elements. The best time to plant is November through January in the early part of the rainy season.
- Call the Bureau of Urban Forestry at 415-641-2676 one week in advance to schedule a final site inspection. Attend the inspection. At the inspection, staff will sign-off on the finished project or notify you if changes are necessary. Once changes are made, another post-construction site inspection is required.

Guidelines:

1. Sidewalk gardens must leave spaces for pathways that are at least 6 feet wide, level and free of obstructions.
2. The City of San Francisco encourages planting trees along with sidewalk gardens. However, a Tree Planting Permit (see page 4) is required. Tree Planting Permits are free and may be submitted together with the Sidewalk Landscaping Permit.
3. The Department of Public Works Bureau of Urban Forestry staff must approve plant selections and design. Select native plants that are suitable to local climate conditions. Consider sunlight, soil quality and groundwater availability. Trees need space around them, so avoid planting within 3 feet of young tree trunks and planting near the bases of established trees.
4. To ensure sidewalk safety and to allow storm water to drain into the soil, raised planters are discouraged. However, raised planters may be permitted in locations where sidewalk landscaping is not.
5. Where parking spaces exist, at least two feet of sidewalk parallel to the face of the curb must remain clear and unobstructed by landscaping.
6. For every 20 feet, the size of an average parking space, sidewalk landscaping must allow for a perpendicular pathway that is at least 4 feet wide.
7. For sidewalk pathways, consider using pavers that allow rainwater to reach the soil. Recommended pavers include brick, compacted crushed stone, decomposed granite and permeable concrete. Pavers must be level with the sidewalk, set on a firm base and free of obstacles.
8. Sidewalk landscaping must be less than 3 feet tall in the following locations:
 - (a) 25 feet in front of traffic signs or signals.
 - (b) 25 feet on the approach of intersections and 10 feet on the exit of intersections.
9. A raised edging for the visually impaired must mark both ends of the landscaped area. This edging must be between 6 and 15 inches high. Build the edging out of wood, stone, metal or other material, and make sure it allows water to flow into the sidewalk garden.
10. Other raised edging/structures, for example, stones or sculptures, are permitted but may require an additional permit.
11. The grade of the sidewalk landscaping must be 1 inch lower than the sidewalk to allow water to drain into the soil. In steep locations, landscaping must be terraced to avoid erosion and spillage onto the sidewalk.
12. Any parking signs, street lights, utility poles or other aboveground infrastructure must remain anchored in the concrete.
13. Streetlights, utility poles, mailboxes, trash receptacles, bike racks, et cetera, except parking meters, must remain accessible by a pathway that is perpendicular to the curb. This pathway must remain 3 feet wide from the center of most fixtures.
14. All landscaping must allow for at least 6 inches access on all sides of underground utilities.
15. No sidewalk landscaping will be permitted:
 - (a) If the sidewalk is less than 7 feet wide.
 - (b) Next to Bus Zones where the sidewalk is less than 15 feet wide.
 - (c) Next to Handicap Parking Zones where the curb is painted blue.
 - (d) Next to Crosswalk Zones.
 - (e) At intersections within curved portions of sidewalk.
 - (f) At curb ramp locations.
 - (g) Within 5 feet of fire hydrants.
16. The permit holder is responsible for maintaining sidewalk gardens including pruning so plants do not grow into sidewalk pathways.
17. The permit holder must be aware of the locations of underground and aboveground utilities and is responsible for avoiding interference with or damage to electric and telephone lines, sewers and other utilities.