

Planting Under Power Lines by Larry Figart

The term "Right Tree Right Place" means planting a tree that is in harmony with the site characteristics in which it will be planted. For instance a live oak would not be a good fit if it was planted in the yard of a small patio home. A better tree in that case may be a fringe tree, or Walter's viburnum. By planting the right tree for the right place we assure that the tree will thrive in the space we give it.

Serious conflicts often develop between utilities and trees. Trees that grow into electric wires can be both dangerous and hamper electric reliability. Jacksonville Electric Authority spends approximately 7 million dollars for tree pruning, which the consumer pays for through our electric bill. In addition, trees are often disfigured by improper pruning and killed or seriously injured by excavation for underground wires and pipes.

The electric utility is required by law to provide reliable electric service and the large tree planted underneath powerlines will almost always draw the short straw when it comes to overhead wire conflicts. Trees under and adjacent to utility lines are typically pruned to provide a 10 ft. safety zone around electric wires. Though utilities may be following acceptable standards with natural target/directional pruning methods when obtaining required clearance; the tree may be left with a wide "V" shape or an "L" shape depending on the location of the tree and the power line. The correct tree in the right location around overhead utilities can improve the look of our urban streetscapes.

Trees planted within 20 ft. of an overhead utility should be a small maturing tree that does not get more than 25 feet tall when fully grown. Smaller maturing trees such as redbud, crape myrtle, and chaste tree are good examples. It is recommended that trees planted between 20 and 50 ft. of an overhead utility be medium sized trees that are shorter than 40 feet tall at maturity. Lacebark elm, hollies, and river birch are typical examples. If you would like to plant a tall tree, it is recommended that the tree be planted more than 50 feet away from the power line to avoid any utility/tree conflicts.



Photo Credit: Ed Gilman UF/IFAS

Additionally water, sewer, and natural gas, electric and phone may all be located underground. It is important that you locate underground utilities before you plant a tree. You risk serious injury if you cut into an underground electric line and costly service disruptions if you cut into other utilities. You can avoid these issues by calling the Florida Utility Locator Service by dialing 811 before every digging job. This will get your underground utility lines marked for free and help prevent utility damage. You should allow a few days in order to get all the utilities marked. For information online go to: <http://www.sunshine811.com/>.

Trees Under Powerlines Project by Larry Figart



New tree planting

With the help of Duval County Master Gardeners, we are initiating a tree planting project demonstrating several trees that can be planted safely under power lines. The trees will be planted at the Duval County Extension Office along the parking lot bordering McDuff Avenue. The trees, donated by the Jacksonville Electric Authority, were chosen from a list

of trees evaluated by Dr. Ed Gilman at the University of Florida. The planting the following list of trees will be completed by mid-November.

- *Acer buergerianum* 'Streetwise' (Trident Maple)
- *Callistemons citrinus* (Red Bottlebrush)
- *Cercis canadensis* 'Forest Pansy' Redbud
- *Chionanthus virginicus* (Fringetree)
- *Halesia diptera* (Two-winged Silverbell)
- *Ostrya virginiana* (American Hophornbeam)
- *Vitex agnus-castus* 'Shoals Creek' (Chastetree)
- *Lagerstroemia indica* (Crapemyrtle)
- *Carpinus caroliniana* (Blue Beech)
- *Cupressus arizonica* 'Sapphire' (Arizona cypress)

For more info: http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/treesandpowerlines/northeast_florida.shtml