



City of Austin Cemetery Tree and Turf Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. I would like to plant a shrub or tree at a City of Austin Cemetery. What is the process?

We have historically allowed certain types of trees and shrubs to be planted near gravesites and this practice has resulted in some plant installations that may be problematic. We may have inexperienced individuals installing invasive varieties, large trees under small trees, and other instances that caused undesirable or unsustainable results from improper selection of either plant material or the installation area. We currently have a moratorium on new shrub and tree plantings to allow us to develop a comprehensive vegetation plan that will identify appropriate types and suitable locations. Tree planting decisions, in particular, need to take into consideration the full lifespan of the tree to ensure that impacts due to future burials, site uses, and cemetery operations are minimized. Further, we value the public's assistance with maintaining vegetation and want to ensure that your contributions of time and resources are spent most efficiently. Our Cemetery management staff is working with the Parks and Recreation Forestry Division and others to develop a plan on the selection of varieties to help improve longevity, elimination of invasive shrubs or trees in compliance with PARD criteria, and to help choose more drought tolerant shrubs or trees.

2. Why is there a plan needed for shrub and tree planting for the City of Austin Cemetery sites?

Since the City of Austin took over the maintenance responsibilities from an outside contractor on April 1, 2013, we have found numerous varieties of shrubs and/or trees that have been planted that do not do well in our Central Texas Zone. Specific reasons can range from cold hardiness, invasiveness, size of species at maturity, toxicity, drought tolerant, native, etc. Additionally, we want the public to help us manage our cemeteries by ensuring that future planting areas enhance the experience for all our citizens.

3. When will Cemetery Management, Forestry, and the outside consultant have this plan in place?

This effort is a part of the Cemetery Master Plan, which will include analysis and recommendations specific to cemetery landscapes. All of the Cemetery Master Plan updates can be viewed at <http://austintexas.gov/cmp>.

4. How will the public be made aware of the selections with regard to shrub and tree plantings?

Once approved, the list of recommended tree and shrub varieties will be placed on the city cemetery website. The website is <http://austintexas.gov/department/cemeteries>. We will also retain this list in the Administrative office for customers to obtain.

5. What is the City of Austin's policy regarding ball moss on trees and shrubbery?

After hearing numerous requests and concerns about ball moss, we consulted with the City of Austin's Forestry Division on this issue. We were advised that ball moss, while unsightly, at current levels is an aesthetic issue and does not negatively impact the tree or shrub or deplete it of any significant resources.

6. How often does the City prune trees and shrubs?

We currently trim back trees and shrubbery in the summer and winter seasons unless there is a safety concern. Part of the reason for this is to reduce the spread of oak wilt, a fatal tree disease. The timeframe recommended for the pruning process is from late June to October and late November to the middle of February. If you have a request for a specific tree or shrub to be pruned, please contact the Administrative office and we will create a work order for your request. Tree issues that constitute a public safety risk will be prioritized over others.

8. What type of grass is planted by the Cemetery when sodding a space after a burial or when re-sodding a space?

We currently recommend several varieties of Bermuda grass and routinely check into new varieties being developed that could be more drought tolerant, which will thrive in our Central Texas conditions. We will not plant sod during the winter months December through February, but will begin again in March once the threat of freezing weather passes. We also do not plant in July and August, due to heat conditions.

9. If my grass dies, how do I go about having it replaced?

When the initial sod has been placed after the burial and for some reason dies, the City has a fee of for re-sodding a space. This fee includes our cemetery staff removing the dead sod, adding dirt with nutrients when needed, installing the new sod, and watering twice a day for a minimum of 2 weeks to help develop the roots. Please contact the Administrative office for assistance. In the event sod that was placed on a recent burial space fails to get established, we will replace this sod at no charge as part of our normal maintenance efforts. Additionally, we will water all cemeteries, except Plummers Cemetery, in compliance with the City's water conservation plan and on scheduled watering days.

10. If I have a question that is not addressed here, how can I get that question answered?

Please call the Cemetery Administrative office at (512) 978-2320 or email us at cemeteries@austintexas.gov.