

Contact:
Ben Carson, Urban Forester
carsonb@ci.missoula.mt.us (406) 552-6268

100 Hickory Street
Missoula, MT 59801
www.missoulaparks.org



MISSOULA PARKS AND RECREATION PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

For immediate release through May 31, 2023

Tapping public trees for syrup is illegal, damages trees, officials warn

The City of Missoula Urban Forestry Division reminds residents that tapping City-owned maple trees for syrup is illegal and can damage the tree. Urban Forester Ben Carson says tapping an already-stressed street tree depletes its natural energy reserves and creates entry points for disease and decay.

"As many people look toward local, sustainable food practices, it may be tempting to try syrup tapping the maples that line city streets," says Urban Forester Ben Carson. "But tapping a street tree will drain the stored energy the tree has been saving to leaf out in the spring. Urban trees face a harsh growing environment including drought conditions, compacted soil, limited soil volume and porous soils—so it's critical we don't exert additional stresses on them."

While tree tapping can be done safely to minimize the damage to a healthy tree, Carson says tapping creates a wound that may not seal. In addition, the equipment designed to pull sap directly from a tree's vascular system is a convenient pathway for potential infection. City Ordinance 3043 prohibits injuring or damaging trees in the public right-of-way.

Missoula's urban forest is a public resource providing innumerable ecosystem benefits to residents and visitors. Street trees are an integral part of Missoula's green infrastructure, providing cooling in the summer, mitigating urban heat islands, filtering thousands of gallons of stormwater and cleaning the air. In addition, street trees help reduce greenhouse gases and make our community a more pleasant place to live.

Right-of-way widths vary throughout the City, and many public trees appear as though they could be located on private property. Please contact the Urban Forestry Division at Citytrees@ci.missoula.mt.us or 552-6253 if you are unsure whether a tree is in the public right-of-way.

For more information on caring for street trees, visit www.missoulaparks.org