

Tree roots: a growing problem

Preventing pipe damage from tree roots

Trees versus pipes

Trees provide pleasant shade around the home and are friendly to our environment, but their roots can create havoc with the water and sewer system.

Tree roots are responsible for the majority of Melbourne's sewer and drain blockages and these problems are most common in residential properties. They can also damage buildings, footpaths, fences and pipes.

This problem can be avoided if care is taken when selecting trees and deciding where to plant them.



Who is responsible?

Once a tree root finds its way into a sewer pipe, it may grow into a fibrous mass, spreading long distances, reducing flow and eventually causing blockages and pipe damage. Property owners are responsible for maintaining all plumbing fixtures up to the connection with South East Water's sewer branch, which is usually inside the property boundary. Tree roots can also damage water mains and property service pipes, which can result in leaks. In some instances, we may remove the offending tree to repair damage or prevent future damage.

Planting in nature strips

If you would like to plant trees in your nature strip you need to first gain permission from your local council and then contact South East Water for the location of the sewer and water mains.

You should also consider the size of the tree when it reaches full maturity and take into account any hazardous situations such as overhead power lines, potential blind spots, or your neighbours' property, paving and drains.

Prevention is better than cure

Before you plant trees, make sure you know where the pipes on your property are. To find out, you can purchase a property sewerage plan from South East Water. Call **131 694** or visit our customer service counter at 101 Wells Street Frankston VIC 3198.

When selecting trees, visit your local nursery for advice. They will assist you in choosing the appropriate trees or shrubs for your garden, and more importantly those trees you should avoid planting near pipes. There are no hard and fast rules but there are, however, certain problem species that require care when deciding where to plant.

Problem plant varieties to avoid within 2 metres of pipes

Please note that this list is intended as a helpful guide but does not claim to be comprehensive. If any plant on your property interferes with our water or sewer main we have the legal right to remove it under the *Water Act 1989*.

Avoid planting these varieties within 2 metres of pipes

Apple tree	Florida yellow-trumpet
Australian indigo	Flowering: crabapple, almonds, plums, apricots, cherries, peaches
Banksia: red, Caley's, hill, Dryandra leaved, heath-leaved, bull, hooker's, coast, nodding, desert, round-fruited	Gardenia
Bottlebrush: swamp, gravel, prickly, Captain Cook, crimson, Gawler hybrid, kings park, lilac, SA red, lemon, fiery, green, stiff-leaved, willow, Albany, needle or bearded, weeping, goldfields	Geraldton wax
Bower plant	Golden grey mulga
Broad-leaf sea urchin	Golden rain tree
Broombush	Golden stalk
Bush germander	Golden tip
Bushy cherry	Grampians thryptomene
Cabbage tree (giant dracaena)	Grass tree
Cassia	Grevillea: cat's claw, silver-leaved, rough, fern-leaved, flame, smooth, toothbrush, prickly, lavender, desert, rosemary, royal
Ceanothus	Grey mulga
Chinese or golden abelia	Gum: SA cup, Diels, red-capped, Lindsay, fuschia, rose, weeping, pear-fruited
Claw flower	Gungurru
Common escallonia	Hakea: oval-leaved, pincushion, Mueller's, grass-leaved, yellow, Christmas, beaked, willow, furrowed, furze, wavy-leaved, bottle brush
Creeping coprosma	Hawthorn: Lavalley, May tree, Chinese, pink india
Cutleaf hibbertia	Hibiscus
Cypress: Swan River	Hillock bush
Dusty Miller (<i>Centourea Cineraria</i>)	Himalayan cotoneaster
Emu bush: magenta, spreading, spotted, twin-leaf (weeooka), white (flowering lignum), silvery, common (tar bush)	Hoary blue bush
Evergreen oleaster	Honeysuckle
Evergreen spindle	Hopbush: narrow-leaved, sticky (Ake Ake)
Feather flowers	Jacaranda
Fiddlewood	Judas tree
Fire flower	Kangaroo thorn
Firethorn: lalande, Nepal, yellow-berry	Karo
	Large-leaf bush pea

Avoid planting these varieties within 2 metres of pipes

Laurustinus

Lilac chaste tree

Lily pilly: blue lily pilly

Limestone fuchsia

Mallee: square-fruited, Southern Cross, SA coastal, tail sand, slender-leaved, curly, course-leaved, kruse's, round-leaved, bell-fruited, Ooldea, Kingscote, red (morel), four-winged, Webster's

Mirror bush

Murchison claw flower

Myrtle: juniper, snow, fringe, lemon-scented, mauve crepe, pink crepe, mallee honey, cross-leaved honey, upright cross-leaved honey, granite honey, scarlet honey, slender honey, yellow-flowered grey honey, western honey, limestone honey, graceful honey, rough honey, Steedman's honey, thyme honey, broombush honey, Wilson's honey

Native apricot (weeping pittosporum)

Needle bush

Net bush: rough-leaved, crimson, wooly

New Zealand Kohuhu

Ngaio

Nitre bush

Oleander

Orange browallia (marmalade bush)

Orchid tree (bauhinia)

Pineapple guava

Pink rice flower (dark and light pink)

Pink velvet bush

Queensland poplar (bleeding heart tree)

Red parrot pea

Red templetonia (cockie's tongues)

Robin redbreast bush

Rock rose: laurel-leaved rock rose

Rose of the west (mottlecuh)

Rosemary

Saltbush: coast, old man, silver, berry

Scarlet kunzea

September bush

Showy: dryandra, groundsel

Silver marlock (tallerack)

Silver tree

Sky flower (duranta)

Slaty sheoak

Slender myoporum (weeping boobialla)

Slender velvet bush

Spanish broom

Spirea

Sturt's desert rose

Swamp mallet

Swan River pea bush

Tea tree: green, tantoon, Victoria coastal, silky, round-leaved, New Zealand

Teddy bear bush

Thorn: Washington, Mexican

Tree aloe

Turkey bush

Veronica

Violet mist flower

Wattle: gold dust, sandhill, boxleaf, wallowa, thorn, knife-leaved, WA coastal, drummond, gossamer, gland, hairy pod, flat, hakea, sticky, Flinders Range, umbrella brush, sallow, Menzel's, notable, Queensland silver, golden, nealie, needle bush, silver, round-leaved, hard-leaf, SA coastal, Mudgee, spiny, hindmarsh, varnish, hairy, elegant or bramble, dwarf nealie

Western myall

White cloud tree

Wilga

Winged yellow-trumpet

Yellow kangaroo paw

Yellow kowhai

Problem plant varieties to avoid within 3.5 metres of pipes

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Avoid planting these varieties within 3.5 metres of pipes

Alder: Italian, English, black, evergreen	Gimlet: silver, two-winged
American hackberry	Gilga
Ash: golden, manna, velvet or Arizona, mountain, Rowan	Glossy privet
Bangalow palm	Grape vines (including glory vine)
Banksia: Ashby's, bird's nest, burdett's, silver, firewood, water, orange, acorn, saw, showy	Gum: Burdett, WA coastal, Kangaroo Island narrow-leaved, SA coastal, pink, WA scarlet flowering gum, fuchsia, brushy blue, rough barked ribbon, Port Lincoln, pink flowering blue, large-fruited SA blue, nodding, silver-leaved mountain, gimlet, Wallangarra white, willow, Steedman's, yellow-flowering, hybrid coral, Coolgardie, lemon-flowering, sweet gum, water (Kanooka), white
Barberry	Gungurru
Blackbutt: Cleland's, Dundas, Kondinin, Le Souef's	Hakea: sweet
Blackwood	Hibiscus: desert rose (red-centred), native, lilac
Boobialla	Holm oak
Bottlebrush: scarlet	Honey locust
Box: long-leaved, river, mallee, silver, brush, elder, broad-leaved	Hybrid flame tree
Brush cherry	Indian coral tree
Carob tree	Irish strawberry
Chestnut: cape, Spanish	Ironbark: narrow-leaved, red-flowered red
Chinese elm	Jacaranda
Chinese pistachio	Japanese privet
Chinese tallow tree	Jerusalem thorn
Chinese wisteria	Judas tree
Coolibah: smooth-barked	Juniper
Cotoneaster; silver leaf cotoneaster	Kaffir plum
Cypress: white, sand or Bribie Island, black, slender, shrub, Arizona	Kurrajong: desert
Dry land tea tree	Laburnum
Dundas mahogany	Laurel: Brisbane, Queensland
Emu bush: Bignonia, Eurah, Berrigam, long-leaf	Liquidambar
Fiddlewood	Maidenhair tree
Fig: creeping, variegated rusty	Mallee: Kangaroo Island, white, desert, brown, Victoria desert, rough fruited, silver mallee apple, white, Dumosa, Kingsmill, grey, red, thick-leaved, Ravensthorpe, box, swamp, fluted horn, green
Firethorn	
Flame tree	
Flowering: almond, pear, tamarisk	

Avoid planting these varieties within 3.5 metres of pipes

Marlock: limestone, long-flowered, black	Spring bloodwood
Mealy stringybark (argyle)	Sweet bursaria (Christmas box)
Mississippi sugarberry	Sycamore
Mock orange	Sydney red gum
Moort: round-leaved	Tulip tree
Morrel (Boongul)	Varnish tree
Mulga	Waddy
Myrtle: dwarf or scrub apple, smooth-barked apple, olive-leaved honey, alternate-leaved honey, bracelet honey, Diosma-leaved honey, Chenile honey, flax-leaved honey, common, WA willow (peppermint tree)	Walnut
New Zealand Christmas tree	Water bush
New Zealand laurel	Wattle: Wallangarra, raspberry jam, Cootamundra, orange, silver, queen, green, fringed, Oswald's, Broughton willow or wattle, cedar
Oak: black	White cedar
Octopus / umbrella tree or Australian ivy palm	White wood
Oleander	Woolum (native frangipani)
Pagoda tree	Yate: bushy, warty
Paperbark: swamp, SA swamp, broad-leaved	Yorrell
Pine: Port Jackson, Swiss mountain, mountain, brown, plum	
Pink Marri	
Pittosporum: sweet, variegated	
Powder bark	
Prickly paperbark	
Pyramid tree	
Queensland bean or ebony tree	
Queensland lace bark	
River cooba	
Salt or Sargent's Mallett	
Sheoak: weeping, drooping, rose	
Silk tree	
Silver birch	
Silver peppermint	
Small leaf linden	
Southern hackberry	

To contact us

Phone

Faults and emergencies	132 812 (24/7)
Account enquiries	131 851
Hearing impaired service	133 677
	ask for 131 851
Interpreter service	(03) 9209 0129

Head Office

101 Wells Street
Frankston VIC 3198 Australia

southeastwater.com.au