Facilities Planning and Construction
Division of Administration & Finance

Tree Numbering and Reporting Guidelines

May 2025

Purpose

Follow these standards when planting or removing trees on the University of Houston Campus. Conforming to University requirements will ensure the integrity and consistency of the campus Geographical Information System (GIS), which includes a database of more than 3,000 trees.

For Trees to be Planted

1. Request a block of new tree numbers from the UH Project Manager and UH FPC GIS Manager during Construction Documents.
2. Advise the anticipated number of trees to be planted as part of the project and the expected timing (calendar year).
3. At planting, furnish and attach 1.25-inch round, brass tree tags to each new tree planted. Locate tags at 4.5 feet above grade.
4. Number the tags using the format YY-XXX, where "YY" is the year planted and "XXX" is the tree number within the assigned block of tree numbers.
5. Provide latitude and longitude coordinates for each tree planted.
6. Identify the species of each tree planted. Use common names—e.g., Live Oak, Texas Redbud, Overcup Oak, Montezuma Cypress, etc.
7. Provide the caliper of each tree as measured at 12 inches above grade.
8. Include one full height photo (e.g., jpeg) of each tree planted as part of the tree's GIS attributes record. Include the installed tree tag in a second photo. Save the photos using the format YY-XXX_Z, where "YY" is the year planted, "XXX" is the tree number, and "Z" is the photo number. For example, 25-101_1.jpeg is the first photo of tree #101 planted in 2025.
9. Recommend use of Esri GIS software and/or apps to collect tree data and photo attachment(s) for each tree record.
10. Submit GIS files (.GDB) or spreadsheets (e.g. .XLS). Include the following fields:

Field Name	Field Type	Field Description
Tree ID	YY-XXX	Unique tree tag ID (year-tree number format)
Tree Type	Text	Tree species (common name)
Latitude	Numeric	Latitude in Decimal Degrees (NAD 83)
Longitude	Numeric	Longitude in Decimal Degrees (NAD 83)
Caliper Measure	Numeric	Trunk diameter (inches) at 12 inches above grade
Date Planted	Date	Year and month tree was planted (YYYY-MM format)
Landscape Contractor	Text	Name of company that planted the tree

11. Submit files within 30 days of Substantial Completion. Submit files to the UH Project Manager and UH FPC GIS Manager.

For Trees to be Removed

1. Provide a spreadsheet (e.g., .XLS) of all trees removed.
2. Include the following fields:

Field Name	Field Type	Field Description
Tree ID	Numeric	Existing Tree Tag ID. If none, provide campus location.
Caliper Measure	Numeric	Tree trunk diameter (inches) at 4.5 feet above grade
Date Removed	Date	Year and month tree was removed (YYYY-MM format)
Comments	Text	Reason for removal. Select one: new construction; utility conflict; storm damage; disease; safety.

3. For Facilities Services maintenance, submit file to UH FPC GIS Manager within 30 days of tree removals.
4. For construction projects, submit file either at time of removals or no later than 30 days after Substantial Completion. Submit file to the UH Project Manager and UH FPC GIS Manager.

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Tree Tags: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Tagging trees during a tree inventory or risk assessment project can be one of the toughest decisions to make when finalizing the scope of work for your project. “Will it hurt the tree?” or “Will it be an eyesore and be unattractive?” are two of the most common questions clients have regarding this topic. This handout is a simple guide to help you navigate the “tree tagging question” and why you should tag trees during your next tree inventory project.

Geographic Positioning System (GPS) technology is an accurate (within 1 meter) method to use when mapping the location of trees during a tree inventory or risk assessment project. However, we always recommend tagging trees as well as collecting GPS information to ensure positive tree identification. Attaching a physical tag on each tree is an inexpensive, simple way to avoid any confusion about which tree to treat, prune, or remove.

Options

Tree tags are made of brass or aluminum and range from a 1 ¼” round numeric tags to a custom arboretum style Quick Response (QR) code plaque. For most tree inventories, we recommend round, numeric brass tags. After several weeks on the tree, the brass tags develop a patina that makes them almost invisible. Sometimes a custom arboretum style tag is desired to highlight particular trees. The arboretum style and QR codes are laser engraved on photo anodized aluminum. Our standard options are shown below, but additional sizes and styles are available upon request. We do not recommend plastic tags because they deteriorate within years and tend to crack and fall off as the tree grows in diameter. Contact the Bartlett Consulting Advisors team for more information about tag options.

Common Questions

Scenario 1

- **Question**: “Will the tree tag damage my tree?”
- **Answer**: “Tagging screws are set into the sapwood of the tree. At this depth, the tree can rapidly compartmentalize the screw causing no significant harm to the tree. This practice is endorsed by the International Society of Arboriculture in their *Best Management Practice for Tree Inventories 2nd edition*.”

Scenario 2

- **Question**: “How obvious will the tree tag be?”
- **Answer**: “When using brass tags, a few weeks after installation you may have trouble finding it unless you know where to look due to the patina blending in with the bark of the tree. The position of the tree tag is up to the client, but we always recommend placing it on the least visible side of the tree.”

Scenario 3

- **Question**: “Can you tag my small diameter trees?”
- **Answer**: “Yes, we always recommend the screw method when tagging trees; it leads to less lost or hard to find tags. Tree tags are typically located on the least obvious side of the tree at a height of about six feet. Tags are affixed with a 2½” or 3” coated deck screw to allow for easy adjustment in the future. If you decide to not screw the small diameter trees (less than 2” DBH), we recommend using a loop of coated wire, rather than zip ties that can become brittle and break due to sun exposure. Keep in mind; if you do not remove the wire from the branch it is attached to, it can cause girdling of the branch in the future. The photos below show different methods to attach tags to small diameter trees.”

Scenario 4

- **Question**: “Will the tree tag become unreadable with the exposure to weather?”
- **Answer**: ”No, tree tags are either stamped or laser etched. Therefore, the number will be legible and won’t degrade. However, we have found that squirrels sometimes file their teeth on the edges of aluminum tags. This can remove the number and the QR code from the tag. The photo below shows an aluminum tag that the face of the tag was completely stripped off by a squirrel. We have not seen any squirrel damage to brass tags.

Scenario 5

- **Question**: “What about using springs to keep the tag away from the bark?”
- **Answer**: We always angle the screws at a downward angle to make sure the tag stands off the tree, so no additional hardware is required. As shown in the photos below, if you don’t back the screws out every few years, the tree will grow over the spring and tag.

Springs have no added benefit to the tree tag other than keeping tags from jingling in the wind.

Scenario 6

- **Question**: “Will the tree tags move up the tree after many years?”
- **Answer**: No, trees grow from the tips of the branches not from the base of the tree. Tags will remain at the height they are installed. However, since trees do increase in trunk diameter every year, if you do not maintain the tags they can be “swallowed” by the tree as it grows (see below). Young/healthy trees tend to increase in diameter quicker than mature/declining trees. To avoid tag overgrowth, screws should be backed out every few years to maintain at least an inch of clearance from the outside of the bark.

Bartlett Consulting is a division of The F.A. Bartlett Tree Expert Company with Consulting teams located throughout the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Ireland. This highly educated, experienced, and qualified team provide a wide range of services that include tree preservation, construction monitoring, creation of management plans, tree inventories, tree risk assessments and mitigation plans, and development and support for Bartlett’s web-based tree management program ArborScope™.