

*What  
is your  
yard  
telling  
you?*

**Take a minute  
to listen. Your yard  
is a reflection of you;  
take pride in it.**

***If your yard is telling you things like this...***



The fence is broken and has missing boards.

The recycling and garbage cans are overflowing.

Old lumber, tires, boxes and other debris are scattered around.

The car in the yard doesn't run anymore.

The grass is too high and needs regular cutting throughout the season.

***take time to listen...here are some helpful resources...***

# Updated Nuisance Code

## Tacoma's new ordinance

The City of Tacoma Nuisance Code was revised in November of 2002. Here is a summary of some of the items covered under the new code. For specific acts, omissions, places, conditions and things declared to be nuisances please call (253) 591-5001 and request a copy of the Nuisance Code.

### What the new code does:

The Nuisance Code provides for the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Tacoma. It protects the quality of life of neighborhoods from urban blight by providing standards for the appearance and condition of properties.

### What is a nuisance?

Generally a nuisance consists of doing an unlawful act, or omitting to perform a duty, or permitting an action or condition to occur or exist that intrudes on the ability of neighbors or citizens to use or enjoy their properties or public property adjacent to where the nuisance occurs. Some nuisances referred to in the new code are:

- Deteriorated fencing or structures.
- Littered, trash-covered, or overgrown or unkempt vegetation of any type and grasses over one foot in height.
- Improper parking or storage of vehicles on single-family residential lots that impedes the use of yard areas for light, air circulation, recreation, and landscaping.

### The process:

If a complaint against the property is filed and a violation is found, a letter will be sent asking that the violation be corrected. If the property comes into compliance with the code, the case will be closed. If the condition has not been corrected, a second Notice of Violation shall be sent and a civil penalty of \$125 will be assessed. Additional monetary penalties may also be assessed if the condition is not corrected.

### Administrative reviews by the Director and Appeal:

A person may request an administrative review of the Notice of Violation or for the first civil penalty assessed pursuant to enforcement. Appeal of the director's review may be made to the Hearing Examiner.

# Maintaining right-of-way

## Property owners' obligations

The City of Tacoma requires abutting property owners to take care of street rights-of-way from their property lines out to the curbs or edges of pavement (includes sidewalks and planting strips). The City also requires care of alleys out to the edge of pavement or, if unpaved, out to the centerline. Call Asset Management at (253) 591-5505 for more information.

### Private Use Of Street Right-Of-Way

There are a number of conditions that abutting property owners are responsible to prevent from happening in rights-of-way or for permitting to remain upon any part of the right-of-way (including the planting strip).

- Defective sidewalk surfaces.
- Cement surfaces placed adjacent to the public sidewalk.
- Defects in sidewalks or public ways caused or contributed to by the roots of trees.
- Defective conditions caused by tree limbs, foliage, brush, or grass on or extending over public sidewalks.
- Defects resulting from accumulation of ice and snow on public sidewalks or on the right-of-way.
- Defects consisting of foreign matter on the public sidewalks, including, but not limited to, gravel and oil.
- Defective handrails or fences or other similar structures within or immediately adjacent to the right-of-way.
- Basketball hoops, bicycle ramps, skateboard ramps or other similar structures or obstructions within the right-of-way area.
- Uncultivated plants (whether growing or otherwise), weeds, tall grass, uncultivated shrubs or growth higher than two feet that are allowed to remain in or upon any street, avenue, or alley.

### Trees And Shrubs – Trimming And Removal

It is the owners' responsibility to trim overhanging vegetation. All trees, plants, shrubs, or vegetation that overhang and obstruct the full use of the sidewalk or street must be removed by the owner of the property on which they're situated. This includes interference with the clear vision of pedestrians or most vehicles, interference with poles, wires, pipes, fixtures, or any part of a public utility in the right-of-way. Also included is any vegetation which is a fire hazard or menace to public health, safety, or welfare. The vegetation should be removed or destroyed by the owner of the property on which it's situated. Contact the Traffic Engineering Division at (253) 591-5538 to see if you will need a free permit to trim or remove trees.

### Utilities

It is the property owner's responsibility to assure that rights-of-way are unobstructed by overgrown vegetation that hinders the operation of the collection vehicle. Solid Waste Management will notify the property owner, in writing, to remove the obstruction within 14 days. If notification or arrangements have not been made, the Solid Waste Management will remove any obstruction and charge the property owner for the actual cost of the removal. This cost will be billed to the property owner.

# Keeping your yard shipshape

## Here are some tips

Taking the time to hire a reputable landscape contractor can assure quality work for home repairs and renovations at a fair price. Here are some suggestions:

- Hire only a licensed and bonded contractor. Call the Washington Association of Landscape Professionals at 1-800-833-2186 to make sure the contractor is properly qualified.
- Ask friends and neighbors for references. Ask the contractor for references from past customers.
- Determine your budget. Get at least three bids for the work. Most contractors will provide bids at no cost, but be sure to ask if there is a charge when you request a bid. Ask about any costs you don't understand before you sign a contract.
- Make sure you understand any contract you sign, and never sign any contract that doesn't specify what work will be done, the charges, when work will begin and how long the work will take.

### **Lawn Care**

Use organic fertilizers rather than synthetic fertilizers. In particular, use horse food/alfalfa pellets (50 lbs/1,000 sq ft). This mix increases the ability of the soil to hold water, reduces soil compaction and related run-off and erosion, and increases the activity of tiny beneficial soil microbes which feed the plants (but not too fast). The slow-release nature of alfalfa also benefits the growth of grasses over weeds. Mowing, even if it is only four times a year, will also minimize weed infestations

### **Trees**

There is no such thing as a "bad tree"; it just needs to be planted and cared for in the right place. Roots can break pipes and water and sewer lines as well as damage sidewalks. Overhanging limbs can also damage roofs or interfere with power lines. Call the Washington State Cooperative Extension Service Master Gardener Program at (253) 798-7170 or Tacoma Power at (253) 502-8727 for advice on trees. Get qualified help by looking in the telephone directory under "Trees" if trimming or removing the tree is too big a job for you.

### **TAGRO Mix**

Use TAGRO the same way you would use steer manure to enrich your soil for a greener, healthier lawn. Remember, TAGRO also encourages grass to grow faster and thicker and requires more work keeping the lawn cut. For more information on where to get TAGRO and how to use it call the Environmental Services Division at (253) 502-2150.

### **Water Conservation**

Water wisely. Efficient irrigation makes a big difference, because nearly 80 percent of all landscaping problems are caused by over-watering. Probe deeply into the soil near plant roots before watering. Water less often, but more thoroughly. It's better for the plants, conserves water and also reduces your bill. For more information about water conservation or to request water-saving devices call Tacoma Water at (253) 505-8723.

### **Noxious Weeds**

Are there weeds in the yard that may be harmful? Pierce County Noxious Weed Board can assist you in identifying potentially dangerous weeds. Call (253) 798-7263.

### **Ridding Rats**

The best way to avoid rats is to keep the yard clean of garbage, pet food and animal feed, fallen fruit, food scraps and vegetable compost. Keeping grass and bushes trimmed, removing junk piles and other debris like stacked wood, limits where rodents can breed. Be very careful about using poison because children or pets may be at risk. Rat traps are a much better choice.

Call the Washington State Department of Health at 1-888-586-9427 to get a free brochure on rat control.

### **Don't Forget**

A resident of Tacoma can haul vegetation to the City of Tacoma landfill for FREE. Be prepared to show your driver's license and a recent copy of your City of Tacoma utility bill. Remember: a covered load is required when hauling to keep streets clean.

## **Looking for assistance?**

*These programs can help*

### **Household Debris Removal**

The Call-2-Haul program is a free service offered to residents of Tacoma living in single-family homes or duplexes. Each household is allowed pick up of three large items and household debris up to two times a year. For more information on what can be collected or to schedule a pick up, call City of Tacoma Solid Waste Management at (252) 573-2468.

### **Vehicle Removal**

Do you have a used vehicle on your property that needs to be moved? Donate it to one of the agencies below. A free pick up will be arranged. You may qualify for a tax deduction too. A few conditions apply:

- Vehicles must be complete with no missing parts.
- Person donating vehicle must have clear title.

Call the National Kidney Foundation at 1-888-3-KIDNEY or call Catholic Community Services at 1-800-499-5979 for more information on their services.

### **Tacoma CARES (Clean Up and Revitalization Efforts)**

#### **Blighted Structures Abatement program**

Assistance for low/moderate income seniors and persons with physical disabilities in eliminating or making minor repairs to blighted outbuildings and fences. Family members and volunteers provide some of the actual labor while the program covers dumpster and disposal fees. Call (253) 591-5634 for more information.

#### **Yard Debris Removal**

Assistance is available to help seniors and disabled persons to remove yard debris that is a Nuisance Code violation. The same qualifying conditions as above may apply.

#### **Code Enforcement**

The Junk Vehicle, Minimum Building and Structures and Nuisance Code issues are enforced in cooperation with the CARES program. Call (253) 591-5001 to report an unkempt property.

#### **Home Maintenance**

For a free Home Maintenance and Information Brochure, call (253) 591-5001.

#### **Yard Waste and Recycling Collection**

The City of Tacoma offers free 90-gallon brown containers to its residents for yard waste (no rocks, construction debris or sod). The City can also supply 30-, 60-, or 90-gallon blue containers for recycling most plastic, metal cans and paper products. Special smaller containers for glass and batteries are available as well. Pick up is every other week. Call Solid Waste Management at (253) 591-5543 to sign up for this FREE service.

## **Services for seniors and disabled people**

*Special assistance*

### **Volunteer Chore Services**

Provides transportation to the doctor's office and grocery store. Also helps with small home repairs (changing a light bulb, faucet washer or furnace filter, for example), and writing letters, making phone calls, reading mail for the blind and some yard work assistance. Yard work (mostly lawn mowing) is provided by Remann Hall work crews once or twice a summer. Call (253) 502-2690 for income eligibility.

### **Care Team Ministries**

Some churches are organized into service groups and put people in touch with a church in their area with a trained Care Team. The Care Teams help seniors and disabled people with one-time or unusual requests, such as removal of a fallen tree or transportation to the doctor's office. However, only some areas of Tacoma have these services. Call (253) 272-2278 (same as Senior Companions) and ask for Care Team Ministries.

### **Summer Senior Connection**

This is a county-wide service. However, seniors pay the workers what is charged. There are lists of self-employed people willing to work for seniors doing tasks like housework, yard work, carpentry, transportation, etc. Call (253) 893-5861 for more information.

# Making your property safer

Tips on crime prevention

## Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

CPTED plans and maintains physical conditions to reduce opportunities for crime and fear. It is part of a comprehensive approach to crime prevention.

### Some CPTED examples for your property

- Trim bushes down to three feet and trim trees up to seven feet to open up visibility.
- Ensure entrances are visible. Install bright security and porch lights.
- Use solid-core exterior doors and solid doorframes with proper strike plates so door is secure.
- Apply clear border definition of space (e.g., fences, hedges, paving patterns, low walls).
- Use thorny landscape plants as a natural barriers. Also use see-through fencing, like chain-link or wooden fences with fewer slats, which doesn't create hiding places for intruders.
- Use vines or planted wall coverings to deter graffiti.
- Foster a sense of ownership. Owners have a vested interest and are more likely to report intruders to the police. All space should become the clear responsibility of someone.

### Establish a Neighborhood Watch program

Interact with neighbors to foster an environment in which strangers or intruders are more easily identified. Call the Safe Streets Campaign at (253) 272-6824 for information on starting a block watch.

### Tacoma Crime-Free Housing Program

The program works by supporting other efforts that eliminate criminal activity and blight in neighborhoods through code enforcement and an enhanced sense of community and neighborhood pride.

A 2 day seminar teaches how to better protect rental property and to educate yourself and residents in crime prevention techniques. Learn about fair housing issues, changes in landlord/tenant laws, gang and drug lab awareness tips, tenant screening, minimum building and structure codes, fire codes, techniques of crime prevention through environmental design, and more. Also get a manual with sample leases and highlights of all the presentations. To register and/or get more information, please call (253) 591-2008.



City of Tacoma  
Public Works Department  
Building and Land Use Services  
747 Market Street, Room 345 • Tacoma, WA 98402-3701  
www.cityoftacoma.org

# Phone numbers at a glance...

Area code 253 unless noted

## City

Asset Management.....	591-5505
Call-2-Haul .....	573-2468
Crime-Free Housing.....	591-2008
Fire Prevention Bureau.....	591-5740
Tacoma CARES .....	591-5001
Blighted Structures Program.....	591-5634
Code Enforcement .....	591-5001
Tacoma Fire Department	
TAGRO Mix .....	502-2150
Traffic Engineering	
Tree Cutting Permits.....	591-5538

## State

Washington State Cooperative Ext. Service Master Gardener Program.....	798 -7170
Washington State Department of Health .....	1-888-586-9427

## Utilities

Sewer Utilities.....	591-5588
Solid Waste .....	591-5543
Tacoma Public Utilities .....	502-8600
Tacoma Power .....	502-8363
Trees .....	502-8727
Tacoma Water.....	502-8384
Water Conservation.....	502-8723

## Other

Care Team Ministries .....	272-2278
Catholic Community Services, Vehicle Donation.....	1-800-449-5979
National Kidney Foundation Vehicle Donation.....	1-888-3-KIDNEY
Pierce County	
Community Services .....	798-6936
Noxious Weed Board .....	798-7263
Safe Streets Campaign .....	272-6824
Summer Senior Connection .....	593-5861
Vunteer Chore Services .....	502-2690
Washington Association of Landscape Professionals.....	1-800-833-2186