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### **Traffic Circle Maintenance Guide**

The traffic circles that can be found throughout the City of Missoula add beauty and at the same time slow down traffic to make Missoula a safer and better place to live. The maintenance of the landscape can be simple and just takes a little time and effort. Each circle has different plant material, but the maintenance practices remain relatively the same. Here is a basic guide and schedule to help with the maintenance of the ornamental plantings and trees that are found in your neighborhood traffic circles throughout the city.

Remember, all traffic circle vegetation and maintenance should allow motorists to easily see pedestrians in the cross walk.



### **SPRING CLEAN-UP**

- Leaf removal – rake or use a blower to remove the leaves that have accumulated in the plant beds. Do not leave debris in the streets or allow it to block sump drains.
- Deadhead plants (perennials & shrubs) – cut back perennial flowers and leaves down to new growth in the spring. Flowering shrubs (i.e. Potentilla and spirea) can be cut back up to a third or more. This will help the shrubs keep their form. Juniper shrubs should be pruned back to within 6 inches or more of the landscape bed edge.
- Fertilize plant material – the spring is a great time to fertilize plants, this gives them the nutrients they need to keep them healthy. You may want to collect a soil sample for analysis,

Local lawn and garden centers have soil sample test kits. A soil test will reveal pH and possibly what macro and micro nutrients are in the soil. This information will help you choose a fertilizer that will work best for your ornamental plants and trees.

- Top dress – replenish mulch to a depth of at least 3 inches but no more than 4 inches. This will help keep the soil moist, help prevent weeds from germinating, and is also aesthetically pleasing.
- Prune – remove any dead or broken branches in trees that can safely be reached from the ground. If possible it is best to prune before the tree leaves out. Prune any sucker growth from the base or trunk of the tree. Tree branches should be pruned at the branch collar in order for the tree to seal off the wound correctly. More information is [available about pruning here...](#)
- Optional – pre and post emergent herbicides (applied according to label) can be a useful tool when applied in the spring or fall to help curtail weed growth. Integrated Pest Management is a program which gives options from the least toxic pest control to stronger methods implemented at the proper time of year. An example of how you can implement this program would be removing a pest by squishing it or using non-toxic pesticides like soapy water or using a stronger pesticide until the pest is subdued. Pesticides are not for everyone but if you choose to use them in your Integrated Pest Management program be sure to follow all label directions. The [Missoula County Extension](#) Office has a [Pest Management Calendar](#). They also have additional information on implementing this type of program.



### **MAINTENANCE THROUGHOUT THE GROWING SEASON**

- Water plants – water all plants as necessary even those said to be drought tolerant. The amount of water needed by each plant is dependent upon the type of plant and the weather (i.e. temperature and rainfall). Minimally, from late June through early September, be sure to water deeply (the soil should be moist to 6” or greater for most plants and deeper for trees), at least one to two times time per week. Continue water until frost as needed. Consider using Ooze tubes

([What is an Ooze Tube?](#)) to water deeply, for trees in particular. For more information on tree watering, [please click here...](#)

- Weed– the more often the beds are weeded the less time that will need to be spent each visit. When weeding, try to remove as much of the roots as possible so they do not just grow back and need to be pulled again on the next visit.
- Deadhead perennials as flowers fade – throughout the growing season cut back perennials (and shrubbery if desired) to green growth as the flowers fade this helps with esthetics and promotes healthier plants.
- The Missoula County Extension also offers some great information with a [Garden Planting Calendar](#), and a [Plant Diagnostic Database](#).



### **FALL CLEAN-UP**

- Leaf removal – clean up the leaves and tree seed pods after they have fallen by either raking them up or blowing them into the streets along the curb for pick up. Do not block sump drains.
- Final weeding - a final weeding of the landscape bed will make things easier in the spring to care for, and help make them look good during the winter months when not covered in snow.
- Bed roses - if there are any roses it is recommended that they be heeled in for the winter to help protect them. Piling mulch, compost, soil pep or leaves around the base of the plants can be used.

These are some helpful hints that can be used in the maintaining your neighborhood traffic circle landscapes. Following these guidelines will help make our city a beautiful place to live. Good luck and have fun with it.

For more detailed information, visit:

[Missoula County Extension Service](#)

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