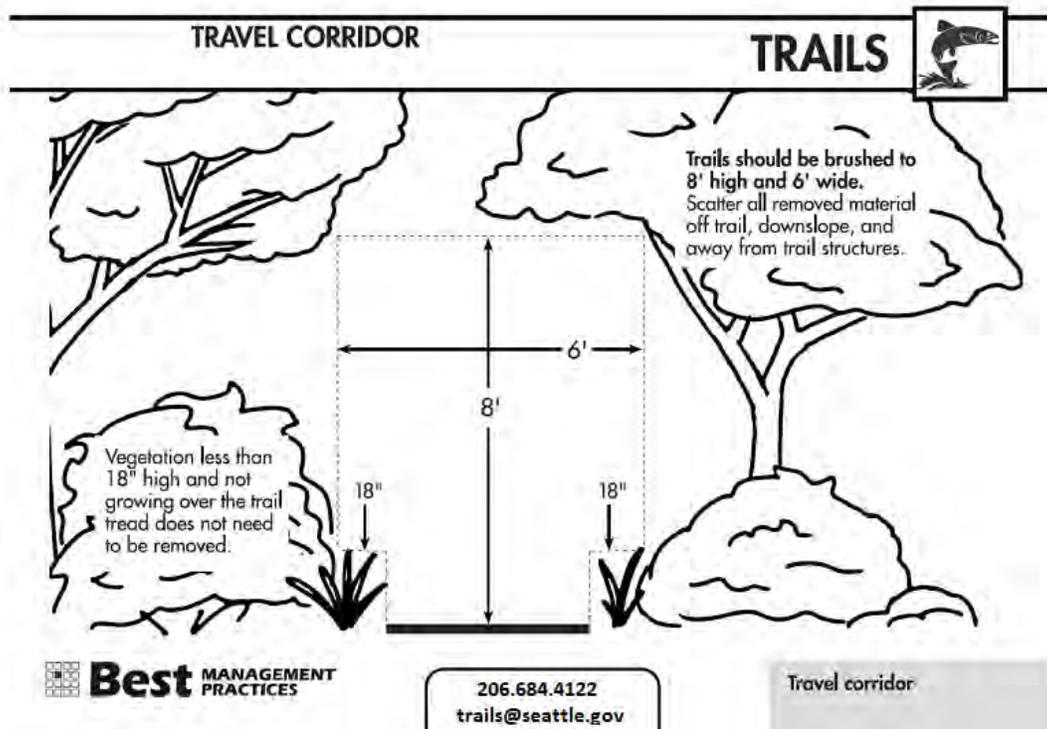


## Trail Corridor Best Management Practices



The trail corridor includes the area where we walk and the area above and to the sides of the trail surface. In all cases, we want to take care to plant the right species of plants within this corridor. While the trails in many places have narrowed over time from a lack of routine maintenance, the restoration should take in account the **standard trail width of 3-4 feet wide and the “brushing” width of 6 feet wide.\***



### Maintaining the Trail Travel Corridor (excerpt from the Park's Best Management Practices for Trails)

In order to provide safe and enjoyable hiking experiences year round, all trails should be free of obstructions and brushed out to a height and width of 8 feet. To accomplish this, vegetation and other elements of the urban forests (e.g.: down trees, rocks, debris piles) should be removed from all trail areas if they encroach into the trail travel way.

- Trails should be brushed to 8 feet high and 6 feet wide. All material removed should be safely scattered off trail, down slope, and away from trail structures.
- Vegetation that is not growing over the trail tread *and* is less than 18 inches high does not need to be removed.
- On steep slopes, vegetation on the uphill side of a trail should be brushed back an additional foot while the vegetation on the downhill slope can remain flush to the trail tread. This encourages hikers to use the more stable uphill portion of the trail tread.

\*"Restoration" or "stewardship trails" are not intended for long term use and will not be maintained to the specifications mentioned here. Although, the public may get used to these trails for access as part of the park's trail system, stewardship trails are generally narrower, used primarily for access to perform stewardship/education activities, and covered with a surface of wood chips. Ultimately, we should have a plan to decommission them once the restoration is established in a site.

- With a hand pruner, saw, or lopper, cut out the vegetation (or other trail obstruction) within 3 feet of the center of the trail.
- **Vegetation over 18" tall should always be cut flush with the ground (take out the whole plant) or at the point where a branch connects to its mother branch or trunk. Removing the whole plant, or at least an entire limb, is best because "stubs" (the exposed cuts on plant limbs) pose a danger to future trail users, and often sprout new "branchlets" out into the trail corridor. Pruning this way insures that the plants do not have to be recut year after year.**

Below is a photo taken recently in West Seattle, where the vegetation has grown into the trail over time. A large shrub has been planted adjacent to the trail. The plant will grow to be larger than 18 inches and would be at risk of removal when the trail is eventually maintained. Please keep this in mind when considering installing plants.



## Take Home Message

- Please don't plant material that will grow significantly over 18 inches within 2 feet of the "Maintainable" Trail Corridor. Even if the trail is narrow now, it will be eventually be brushed back to the standard width.
- Trails maintenance volunteers follow the BMP's to brush back the trail and material that is planted / located in the Travel Corridor (Native or Not). All could be REMOVED completely during this process.

If you have questions about this factsheet, please contact the Plant Ecologist working with you in your Park:

Michael Yadrick (NW, Discovery, CW and SW Districts): [michael.yadrick@seattle.gov](mailto:michael.yadrick@seattle.gov); 206-615-1046

Lisa Ciecko (NE, NC and CE Districts): [lisa.ciecko@seattle.gov](mailto:lisa.ciecko@seattle.gov); 206-386-1371

Jillian Weed (SC and SE Districts): [jillian.weed@seattle.gov](mailto:jillian.weed@seattle.gov); 206-386-1982

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