

## Spruce up for Spring

The crocuses and the birds have been greeting me in the mornings this month. That must mean that spring is here, although the wind seems like the beginning of March! But the warmth of the sun and the flowers springing up remind us all that it's time to spruce up for spring.

Around town, you can see where some of the tree lawns have been spruced up, our neighbors preparing for Reading's street sweeping which normally begins in late March/early April each year. Reading reports that with its two sweepers, weather permitting, it usually takes 8-10 weeks to completely sweep the Town's streets.

It's simple to take action to spruce up sidewalks and walkways for spring and will encourage all of us to get out and enjoy the good weather. Check out the sidewalk area in front of your home and take a few 'steps' to be sure that walkers, joggers, and people on bikes and with strollers will have safer, more attractive walkways to travel on.

Here are some steps you can take:

Check to see if any of **your** shrubs or trees have branches that obstruct the sidewalk and pose a potential hazard to pedestrians. Tree branches and shrubs on your property that overhang the "public way" are your responsibility to remove/clear. Clip or prune obstructing branches, or call a professional to help. Note that if the obstructing tree(s) is on Town property, call the Reading Department of Public Works (781-942-9092) if it needs to be pruned back.

A tree lawn is the "grassy" space between the sidewalk and the street. Maintaining the tree lawn ensures attractive streetscapes in our town; however, if a tree is growing in the area that is part of the public way (the public way extends in about 5' from the pavement edge), it is owned by the Town.

This year the snow melt has exposed a lot of debris (litter, winter road sand, plastics, etc.). Sweep leftover winter sand to the street for the street sweeper, or sweep it up and dispose if the sweeper has already gone by, or collect it for personal use in de-icing next winter. Pick up litter for disposal; and, if it is dog waste, dispose of it in the trash and remember not to put it into street drains! See Reading's flyer at [www.ci.reading.ma.us/Pages/ReadingMA\\_Engineering/Pet Waste Flyer](http://www.ci.reading.ma.us/Pages/ReadingMA_Engineering/Pet_Waste_Flyer).

If the sidewalk has holes, cracks, or tree roots that are tripping hazards, report sizeable holes/cracks/roots to the Reading DPW, or use the form at [www.ci.reading.ma.us/Pages/ReadingMA\\_PublicWorks/request](http://www.ci.reading.ma.us/Pages/ReadingMA_PublicWorks/request).

You can take more steps, by planting flowers or trees, or re-seeding the tree lawn to make it greener. Green streetscapes make your neighborhood more friendly while adding to its "curb appeal". Getting out and walking enhances the feeling of community in our neighborhoods, and walking to your errands reduces traffic and gives your health a boost at the same time as being environmentally friendly.

While you are out, if you see a catch basin that appears blocked, or if you see someone dumping into a catch basin please call the DPW at 781-942-9092 or 781-942-NOW1 and leave your name, phone number and nearest address or street intersection of the catch basin. Residents can assist Public Works by clearing debris off of catch basin grates, cleaning up debris along the curb in front

of their property, and by never putting leaves, grass clippings and other yard waste into a catch basin.

You can even help maintain the catch basin cover near your home, both in the spring and the fall, your help with maintenance is beneficial to all. If you have a town catch basin near your property it would be very helpful and benefit everyone if you could help maintain that catch basin by clearing all debris from around it.

And after you have finished sprucing up for spring, don't forget to take advantage of the cleared sidewalks and get out there to walk, cycle, and jog (cyclists are allowed on town sidewalks except in the downtown – always yield to pedestrians). And enjoy the warm weather!

A column by Reading Climate Committee member Gina Snyder