



Utility Friendly Landscaping

Every year winter turns to spring and spring turns to summer then to fall, only to start all over again. We as Minnesotans, either born and raised, or transplants from some other climate, know this cycle. Our lives are governed by it. At my house, the first thoughts of spring start when the seed catalog arrives in the mail, somewhere around mid February with page after page of super red giant tomatoes, huge green cucumbers and beans. Until I moved to Minnesota, I never realized how many different kinds of beans there are. My wife loves the flowers, pink



Beautiful landscaping, but it will be impossible to repair the transformer without destroying the landscaping and removing mail boxes.

climbing ones, yellow vines, multicolored bushy ones, so many to choose from. Landscaping on a city lot presents some challenges, "What do we do with that big

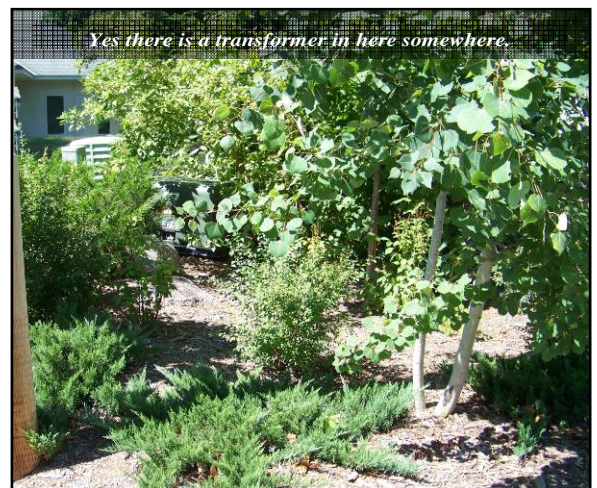
green box in our front yard?" Short answer, nothing. That big green box supplies electricity to you and maybe several of your neighbors. If the power goes out and that box is to blame, you and your neighbors want us to restore power as soon as possible. Digging through bushes and avoiding stepping on flowers to repair or replace that transformer adds time and expense to the project. On top of that, restoration then becomes difficult. We try to do our best at restoration. If we rip up the grass around a transformer to repair a

faulty conductor, we will replace the sod in the affected area, or at the very least, depending on existing conditions, reseed the area. We simply can not replace shrubbery or flowers around a transformer. Mail boxes in front of the transformer presents a similar problem. In some cases the mail boxes would have to be completely removed before any work could be performed on the transformer. Then there is the safety factor to our



Move the mailboxes a few feet either way then landscaping would be perfect.

crews. If there is a fault while the lineman is working on the transformer, we need the worker to be able to evacuate the area as soon as possible. Trying to climb over a four foot bush, hurdling over a row of mail boxes or tripping over some sort of shrub while red hot sparks and flames are shooting out of the transformer makes for a very dangerous situation. Shrubby around a transformer also presents a fire hazard. If the transformer faults, the possibility of igniting the surrounding landscaping increases significantly, creating more delays and possibly increasing the duration and size of the outage as utility crews have to disconnect power from neighboring transformers for the safety of the fire crews.



Yes there is a transformer in here somewhere.

While I'm on the subject of landscaping, I'll talk next about your electric meter. Once a month utility crews venture out into the city to read all electric and water meters in town. I understand that we all want the landscaping around our house to be classy and attractive. Having a gray box with a silver bubble sticking out of it doesn't match with most landscaping schemes. However, fighting through a large bush at the end of the day, after already visiting 300 or more homes to read the meter can be frustrating. It's not just us who want the shrubbery cleared. The National Electrical Code requires three feet of clearance in front of the utility meter. Often times during a home fire, the firemen call the utility out to disconnect power to the structure. The damage to the building increases for every second we can't get to the transformer or meter because of thick foliage. Imagine the meter reading in winter. Our crews may have to trudge through four or more feet of drifted or blown snow and then wrestle with that large bush. While I am on the subject of snow, as you are blowing out your driveway, run a path to the electric meter. Those same 300 meters in January can be miserable to read with your boots full of snow. Access to your meter is an important thing. Many residents would like to build a nice privacy fence around their home and then lock the gate for security. Unfortunately, many times the electric meter is inside the fence and we can not access it unless someone is home to let us in. Residents are required to supply the utility with a key to their gate. Oh, and about your dog, so far we have been fortunate. None of our employees have been seriously injured by an angry Pit bull or some other not so friendly variety of dog, but we have had a few close calls.



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I think a lot of this comes down to common courtesy, but more than that, safety is our primary concern. In years past a lot of this was overlooked and some might say, "What's the big deal?" The "big deal" is safety. Safety for our customers and safety for our crews. An arc flash can happen in an instant and even flash protection clothing can't protect us if we can't get away from the fire. The utility participates in monthly safety classes conducted by the Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association (MMUA). We

are regulated by OSHA regulations, National Electrical Code, National Line Code just to name a few. All these regulations are designed with safety at the forefront. Please help us keep our crews safe and help us keep our costs down. Please rethink your landscaping, move your mailboxes and trim your hedges. Cut and plow a path to your meter and contain your puppy the last 3 or 4 days of each month. Your utility crews thank you for your help.



Thank you from the employees of Delano Municipal Utilities