



Case Study

Philadelphia Museum of Art

At a Glance

Client:

Philadelphia Museum of Art

Location:

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Tree Care Needs:

As the museum embarked on a major renovation, all involved were concerned about the impact of the restoration process and heavy machinery on the trees at this majestic institution.

The Care of Trees Advantage:

After beginning with a landscaping company, the construction manager called in The Care of Trees, which brought specialized knowledge and years of experience to the effort of protecting the museum's trees. The team's approach ensured trees remained hydrated while being shielded from masonry materials and the impact of machinery. The comprehensive approach brought peace of mind to the many stakeholders.

Meticulous efforts protect high-profile trees during Philadelphia Museum of Art's restoration

"The hard work, long hours, and professionalism of The Care of Trees enabled us to overcome a serious setback when our previous landscape consultants and contractors didn't provide the desired results. It is rare in this business to see this level response and professionalism, and I wanted to express our sincere gratitude on behalf of L.F. Driscoll and the Philadelphia Museum of Art."

Jerry Seitzinger, project manager, L.F. Driscoll

The Client

With names like Van Gogh, Dali and Manet, the Philadelphia Museum of Art houses some of the world's most renowned artists and artifacts. Yet, the museum is a work of art in its own right. The quasi-Greek Revival structure, built from 1919 to 1928, serves as a fitting setting for masterpieces.

Along with sculptures, the museum's exterior features several prominent trees and meticulously maintained landscaping – adding to the majestic façade that's visible all the way from Philadelphia's city hall. When the museum began a multi-phased renovation in 2006, many were concerned about the property's trees, including Fairmount Park and the Pennsylvania Horticulture Society, stewards of the landscaping.

The Risks of Renovation

The renovation posed a number of risks for the trees, some of which were very close to the building. The acidic substance that workers would use to clean the façade can change the PH level of soil. This soil change can lead to root loss, possibly resulting in severe decline and death of a tree. Additionally, the work required heavy machinery around the trees, creating compaction that threatens the oxygen supply to the soil.

Peace of Mind with Specialized Tree Care

L.F. Driscoll identified The Care of Trees, the national leader in tree preservation solutions on land development sites. Bill Graham, arborist with The Care of Trees, immediately responded with a comprehensive plan to protect the trees. Based on years of experience, Graham asked a number of questions about the cleaning materials and construction plans in order to respond with an appropriate plan.

When Graham presented the proposal, stakeholders were surprisingly pleased with how well the plan accounted for the extent of the renovation.

“After our first experience with a landscape contractor, everyone was ready to jump on him,” Seitzinger said. “But during Bill’s presentation, everyone became comfortable that the landscaping would be preserved.”

The Care of Trees quickly mobilized and effectively got the project back on schedule. The team began with an irrigation system as the first layer in order to water roots underneath protective coverings. Then, they put down geotextile matting to allow for air flow to the roots. Black plastic, as the next layer, was used to keep alkaline masonry materials from the root system while wood chips helped absorb the possible chemical build up on top of the plastic. They then surrounded the trees in protective fencing and added gypsum block sensors to measure water content.

Additionally, The Care of Trees team took measures to ensure the soil did not compact from heavy machinery. That meant building up layers of root protection matting and modified gravel to disperse vehicle weight. Finally, under the onsite direction of Graham, The Care of Trees systematically pruned branches back from around the building to allow for vehicle access to the museum’s façade without affecting the trees’ health or aesthetics.

Throughout the project, The Care of Trees continued to monitor the trees to ensure they were fairing well during the renovation.

‘In Good Hands’

The trees have remained healthy throughout the renovation, thanks to the collaborative approach and concern among all involved: the museum, L.F. Driscoll, Fairmount Park, the Pennsylvania Horticulture Society, and The Care of Trees.

“It was really a team effort,” Seitzinger said. “Everyone was comfortable with the knowledge and experience that The Care of Trees offered.”

“We were really concerned about the impact of the heavy equipment and sprays on the trees,” said Marilyn Romenesko, project manager and staff horticulturist, Pennsylvania Horticulture Society. “We were so happy to have someone who specializes in tree care on board. So far, we haven’t seen any negative impact on the trees.”

“We were so happy to have someone who specializes in tree care on board. So far, we haven’t seen any negative impact on the trees.”

Marilyn Romenesko
Project Manager, Pennsylvania Horticulture Society



(top to bottom) The irrigation system is placed as a first layer to water roots; matting reduces damage to roots where equipment is used; the trees are surrounded by protective fencing and mulch.

The Care of Trees is one of the foremost, full service tree care companies in the industry. We have over 15 offices and more than 350 dedicated arborists and support staff serving more than 60,000 residential and commercial clients. We have offices serving Greater Metropolitan areas of Chicago, New York City, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. We are able to provide a full range of high quality, state-of-the-art, environmentally responsible tree care services. Our strength is that we offer our clients the extensive resources of a large firm combined with the responsiveness and commitment from our local offices.

