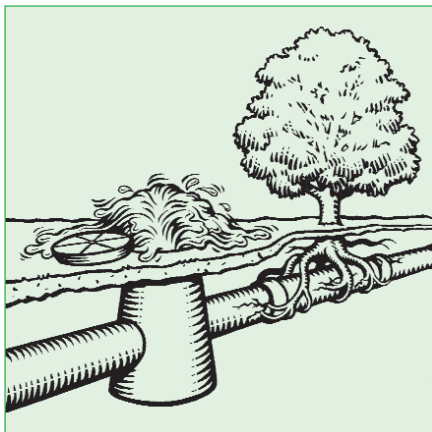


# Keeping plant roots out of your sewer pipes

Beware the hidden intruder!

A plant's roots supply it with the food and water it needs to survive.

However, problems will occur if a plant discovers its next meal is hidden in your or Sydney Water's sewer pipes!



*70 – 80% of sewage overflows are caused by tree roots.*

Roots can damage sewer pipes, obstruct the flow and eventually cause blockage. Root damage can also let stormwater into pipes. During heavy rain this extra water can overload the sewerage system causing it to overflow into waterways and the environment.

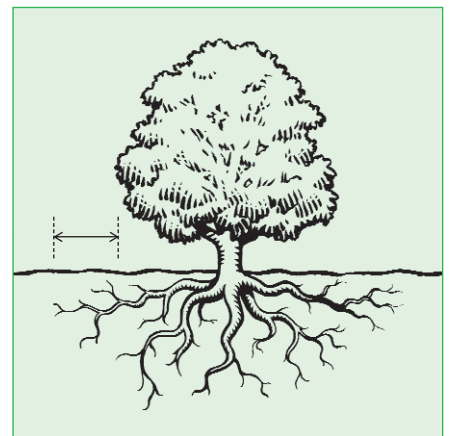
If the problem occurs in your private sewer pipes, it is your responsibility to have it fixed.

**Some problem species are listed on the back of this fact sheet. You should avoid planting these.**

## Avoiding damage to the sewer

Root damage can be reduced by avoiding plant species that are likely to cause problems, and planting trees far away from pipes. Before planting a tree, you should first find out where the sewer pipes are located so that you can stay clear of them. Many home owners have a plan of their property which shows the location of sewer pipes and other plumbing. If you don't, you can get one from Sydney Water or one of our agents.

Next, you should consult a nursery or gardening guide to find out how far the plant's roots will travel. They will usually extend about one and a half times the distance of the adult plant's branches.



*Plant roots extend about one and a half times the distance of the branches.*

## Fixing the damage

If roots have blocked your private sewer pipes you will need to get a licensed plumber to clear them. As well as removing the roots you should consider fixing the damage in a way that will minimise future problems. If you stop roots re-entering your pipes you will save yourself the expense of having to keep clearing them. You will also protect the environment by keeping stormwater out of the sewer. To fix the problem, you should ask the plumber to estimate where the blockage is located. Your plumber can then dig to remove the roots and repair the pipe to stop them entering again. In extreme cases it may be necessary to replace or relocate the pipe. Your plumber can recommend the best solution for your particular problem.

# Keeping plant roots out of your sewer pipes

Beware the hidden intruder!

## Some problem species

Botanical name	Common Name	Damage rating
Cinnamomum camphora	Camphor Laurel	Extreme
Ficus species	Fig Trees & Rubber Plants	Extreme
Populus species	Poplars	Extreme
Salix species	Willows	Extreme
Erythrina species	Coral Trees	Very High
Eucalyptus species	Large Gum Trees	Very High
Jacaranda mimosifolia	Jacaranda	Very High
Liquidambar styraciflua	Liquidambar	Very High
Araucaria species	Norfolk Island & Bunya Pines	Very High
Brachychiton acerifolium	Illawarra Flame Tree	Very High
Casuarina species	Casuarinas	Very High
Melia azedarach	Australian White Cedar	Very High
Pinus species	Pine Trees	Very High
Platanus acerifolia	Plane Tree	Very High
Schinus molle	Pepper Tree	Very High
Ulmus species	Elms	Very High
Bougainvillea species	Bougainvilleas	High
Cortaderia selloana	Pampas Grass	High
Grevillea robusta	Silky Oak	High
Ilex species	Hollies	High
Lagunaria patersonii	Norfolk Island Hibiscus	High
Ligustrum species	Privets	High
Magnolia species	Magnolias	High
Nerium oleander	Oleander	High
Phoenix canariensis	Canary Island Date Palm	High
Phyllostachus species	Bamboos	High
Toxicodendron species	Rhus Trees	High
Lophostemon confetus	Brush Box, Tristania	High
Wisteria species	Wisteria	High

**Remember:** If your pipes are old and cracked, the roots of almost any tree or shrub will find their way in. Where possible, do not plant trees or shrubs anywhere near your sewer pipes.