

Tree Roots in Sewer – Frequently Asked Questions

1. What causes roots to grow into the sewer line?

Most household sewers are made of clay, which can degrade and crack over time. Movement in the earth can also cause sewer pipes to shift, causing small gaps and cracks at the pipe joints. Tree roots about the size of a human hair then grow into these small cracks and gaps in search of water and nutrients.

2. My plumber said the parkway tree is the source of the roots, will you remove it?

The Village values and preserves its parkway trees. A Village forester will come out to evaluate your parkway tree for health and structural stability. Parkway trees are not removed because roots are entering a homeowner's sewer line service. Tree roots don't grow into pipes that are free from cracks or defects, so they are really a symptom, not the cause of the problem.

3. What should I do about roots in my sewer?

Most of the household sewers in Skokie are 60-80 years old. Just like the rest of your house, the sewer requires routine maintenance. If you have roots in your sewer, you may need to rod your sewer annually. Your plumber can provide you with a recommendation for your specific situation. You should also ask your plumber to use the largest sized root rod/cutter possible for the size of your sewer.

4. Is there anything else I can do?

Some homeowners have had success with foaming root killers. These products are available at your local hardware store. It is important to read and follow the instructions carefully as each product is different. Tree roots grow the most in spring and fall. In Skokie, good months to use foaming root killers are April and September.

5. My plumber needs to repair my sewer. It is near a parkway tree, what should I do?

You should call the Village Forester at **847-933-8427** if your plumber needs to dig or trench within 10 feet of a large parkway tree (12 inches in diameter or greater), or within 6 feet of a small parkway tree (smaller than 12 inches in diameter).

Please call at least 5 business days prior to the work as the Forester will likely need to schedule an on-site meeting with your plumber and a representative from the Village Water Department.