

Activists See Scam in City Greenery

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Every single tree planted on Tverskaya Ulitsa as part of Moscow's greening efforts is costing the taxpayer 8 million rubles (\$243,080), according to the Green Alliance party, though municipal officials insist that their work is bringing real benefits to city dwellers.

Moscow's environment and housing departments carry out a number of greening measures each year, including tree planting, improving parks, and restoring city squares on parts of the Garden Ring.

One big initiative is the greening of the heavily polluted Tverskaya Ulitsa — a five-year project begun in 2013 with a budget of 529 million rubles.

Contractors installed 60 containers for trees and bushes, as well as benches and litter receptacles on the street in the first three months of 2013 and planted 66 trees and 619 bushes.

"In the [city] center, every scrap of green is important," Sergei Lyovkin, head of Moscow's

construction department, said Wednesday.

But Oleg Mitvol, council leader at the Green Alliance, said the program costs too much. Greening the city has become a lucrative business, while the ecological benefits of the work are negligible, he said.

The types of trees that are now being planted survive for only one season, after which they must be replanted, adding to the price tag. The head of the city's environment department Anton Kulbachevsky said in March that the city would plant linden, spiraea and euonymus trees in the summer; spruce, thuja and juniper trees in the winter.

It isn't profitable for authorities to plant trees that live longer because they need to keep replenishing the business cycle, Mitvol said.

"It is one big feeder, this greening," he said. "There is enough for everyone."

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