



City of Sebastopol Planning Department
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Summary of the City of Sebastopol Tree Ordinance and Tree Protection Guidelines

What Is The Tree Ordinance?

The City of Sebastopol acknowledges the importance of trees to the community's health, safety, welfare, and tranquility. Trees increase property values, provide shade and cooling, decrease wind velocities, control erosion, conserve energy, reduce stormwater runoff, filter airborne pollutants, reduce noise, provide privacy, provide habitat and food value, and release oxygen. In March of 1992, the City Council adopted a Tree Ordinance, Chapter 8.12 of the Municipal Code, to ensure that the community's trees would be prudently protected and managed so as to ensure these multiple civic benefits.

What Types Of Trees Are Protected?

All trees, other than those species identified on the Escaped Exotic List (as follows), with a diameter at breast height (d.b.h.) of 20" or more on properties that house a single-family use are protected. For all other properties, species identified on the Protected Native Tree List¹ with a d.b.h. of 10" or greater are protected, in addition to all other trees larger than 20" d.b.h., which are not listed as Escaped Exotics.

Escaped Exotic Tree List

Acacias and Wattles	Eucalyptus (all species)
Plume Albizia	Poplars (all species)
Tamarisk and Salt Cedars	

When Are Permits Required?

The removal of any protected tree, as described above, or the pruning of more than one third of a protected tree's roots or crown requires a Tree Removal Permit. No removal permit is needed for an Escaped Exotic tree. Tree Removal Permit applications can be obtained at the City's Planning Department. Contact the Planning Department staff at 823-6167 for additional information about the Tree Removal Permit process and fees.

Tree Protection

Any change in the level of soil within the dripline (the area directly located under the outer circumference of the tree branches) can have a negative impact on a tree. Storage of materials in the dripline area of a tree can lead to soil compaction and tree decline. In addition, tree roots can be harmed via excavation or foundation work. Hand-digging should be employed in sensitive root zones.

For all construction projects that may affect the dripline area or branches of a tree, tree protection measures should be taken. For smaller construction projects which do not require a Building Permit, property owners should consult with an arborist prior to commencing work. For larger projects which do require Planning Department and/or Building Department approval, a Tree Protection Plan may be required prior to commencement of construction. The Tree Protection Plan shall be prepared by a licensed arborist and include, at a minimum, tree protection fencing and a description of the intended tree protection measures, i.e. hand digging and prohibition of the parking of vehicles or storage of materials within the dripline of a tree, of all trees protected (per the previous section) on the subject property and neighboring properties. Tree Protection Plans are reviewed by the City Arborist in accordance with § 8.12.050.

¹ The Native Tree List is available at the Planning Department, or on-line in Municipal Code Chapter § 8.12

How Can I Get A Copy Of The Full Tree Ordinance/Or A Tree Removal Application?

Additional information, applications, and copies of the full Tree Ordinance are available at the Planning Department (823-6167), which is located at 714 Johnson Street. The ordinance is also available on-line at: www.ci.sebastopol.ca.us/planning in the Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 8.12). The Tree Removal Application may be located at www.ci.sebastopol.ca.us/forms in the Planning Forms section.

Violations And Enforcement

Violations of the Tree Ordinance are subject to enforcement. Violators may be subject to a civil penalty of \$500 per protected tree.

Tree Care Guidelines

By following a few simple tree care guidelines, property owners can ensure that their trees will provide the maximum benefits to the community and require minimal maintenance in the future.

Tree Planting Recommendations

1. Plant a climate-appropriate tree. Some trees will not survive our winters. Others require extensive water.
2. Choose a size-appropriate tree. The height, form, or root patterns of some trees are not appropriate for urban areas. Redwood trees, Valley Oaks, and other large species are not recommended.
3. Look up. Do not plant tall trees under utility wires.

Is Watering Necessary? How About Fertilizer?

Newly planted trees must be watered for 2 to 3 years. During the summer dry season (roughly June to October), deep root watering to a depth of 30' is recommended. During the remaining months of the year, monitor the root zone and water as needed. Most trees do not require fertilizer; however if you have questions, check with a licensed arborist to determine if fertilizer is appropriate. A licensed arborist should also be consulted if pest problems or disease is suspected.

Shall I Mulch?

A mulch circle should be maintained around the perimeter of the tree's trunk. Mulch aids in retention of soil moisture and provides nutrients to the tree. Having mulch around a tree also helps to prevent damage to the bark from lawn mowers and string trimmers.

Is Pruning Recommended?

After 2 to 3 years, the tree should be pruned to remove any poorly attached branches. Consult an arborist prior to performing any pruning work. The Sebastopol City Arborist strongly discourages the use of cables and the topping of trees. Additionally, tree topping may constitute Tree Removal if more than a third of the crown is removed. Root pruning should only be performed under the supervision of an arborist.