



City of Sebastopol Planning Department
City Hall, 7120 Bodega Avenue
Sebastopol, CA 95472
(707) 823-6167
<http://ci.sebastopol.ca.us>

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 storm water runoff, filter airborne pollutants, reduce noise, provide privacy, provide habitat and food value, and release oxygen.

The community of Sebastopol through its City Council has determined that a Tree Ordinance is an appropriate mechanism to protect important elements of the town. The City Tree Ordinance is intended to ensure that the community's trees will be prudently protected and managed, so as to ensure the continuance of 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 or duplex 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	Monterey Pine
Tree of Heaven	

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.

There are established criteria for allowing the removal of a protected tree. These include whether the tree is causing property damage, whether the tree is extremely diseased and structurally unsound, whether the tree is in a location where there are planned improvements and there are not reasonably workable alternatives; and other criteria. In your application **you need to articulate your rationale for why you think removal is necessary and which findings under the Tree Ordinance are applicable.**

Tree Removal Permit applications can be obtained at the City's Planning Department. Application fees depend on the type of property involved and the number of trees proposed for removal. A refundable deposit to ensure that required replacement trees are planted is also required.

The applicant is required to ‘post’ notices of the tree removal application. If the removal requires action by the Tree Board, the notice must indicate the hearing date.

Following your application, the City Arborist will visit the site and make a recommendation to the Planning Department regarding your application. Removals on single-family and duplex properties may be administratively approved; other removals require review by the City’s appointed Tree Board.

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 drip line (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 drip line 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 drip line 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 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 drip line 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 code requirements.

¹The Native Tree List may be found on-line in the Municipal Code at <http://ci.sebastopol.ca.us/page/zoning-ordinance>

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

The Tree Ordinance is available on-line at: <http://ci.sebastopol.ca.us/City-Government/Resolutions-Municipal-Codes>

The Tree Removal Application may be located at <http://ci.sebastopol.ca.us/City-Government/Departments-Services/Planning>

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. Generally, try to pick trees with a mature maximum height of 35 feet or less. **Redwood trees, Valley Oaks, Douglas Firs, and other large species are not recommended.** Larger tree species are virtually guaranteed to create future problems.
3. **Look up!** Do not plant tall trees under utility wires. They will cause future maintenance problems, and potentially need severe pruning by the utility companies.

Is Watering Necessary? How About Fertilizer?

Newly planted trees typically should be watered for 2 to 3 years. During the summer dry season (roughly May 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.

Should 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 major pruning work.

Topping: Not Appropriate

The Sebastopol City Arborist strongly discourages the outmoded practice of 'topping' of trees, which removes the major growing elements and **facilitates weak future growth**. Additionally, tree topping may constitute Tree Removal if more than a third of the crown is removed.

Roots/Grading

When planning trenching for utility lines or grading, review likely tree root issues. Try to avoid cutting major roots, which may affect the structural integrity of the tree, or its health. Major root pruning should only be performed under the supervision of an arborist. Hand-digging may sometimes be appropriate.