

Most Often Asked Tree Questions by the Public

1. How do I get the City to trim/prune the tree in front of my house?

***Call the Parks and Recreation Department at 564-5433 and a service request form is made to inspect the tree to determine maintenance needs. The arborist or tree inspector will inspect the tree(s) within 10 working days and prioritize these requests.**

2. Who do I call if a tree, large branch, or palm fronds have fallen or is obstructing the street or sidewalk?

***Call the Parks and Recreation Department service desk at 564-5433 between 8am – 4:00pm during regular work day hours and your call will be referred to the appropriate staff person.**

***On weekends, holidays, or outside of normal working hours, call the City Emergency phone number 963-4286. For serious life-threatening situations or accidents/injuries call 911.**

3. How do I know if the tree in front of my house is a city owned and city maintained tree?

***It is a city tree if it is growing in the parkway; (the area between the curb and sidewalk), or if the middle of the tree trunk is within six feet of a street curb on streets with no sidewalks. Other trees under City Regulation include:**

***Historic or specimen trees;**

***Trees identified on an approved landscape plan that is a component of a development application approved by the City Council, Planning Commission, or Architectural Board of Review.**

***Trees on any property under the jurisdiction of the Historic Landmarks Commission.**

4. Is the tree in front of my house a City, County, or a private tree?

A. A city tree must be along a city street as defined in #3.

***If the tree location is in Montecito, call the Santa Barbara County Public Works Department, Road Maintenance Division at 681-5678.**

***If the tree is located in the City of Goleta, (Winchester Canyon to Patterson), please call City of Goleta Public Works Manager at 805-968-6769.**

B. Any trees or shrubs that are on private property or within the city street right-of-way, but not conforming to the criteria in #3, are private owners' responsibility to maintain.

5. Do I need a permit to prune or remove a tree that is in the street/sidewalk easement area?

***Yes. The Parks Division staff will inspect the tree to determine what actions are necessary, and will either issue the appropriate permit or they may choose to schedule the city to perform the work.**

6. Do I need a Permit to remove a tree, in my front yard or any yard space fronting a public street, on private property?

You do need a permit to remove a tree located in the minimum front setback area of any property in the City. All private yard areas adjacent to public streets and/or ally-ways have designated setback limits.

It is also prohibited to prune a tree in such a way that it alters its natural character or reduces the crown of the tree by more than 1/4 without a permit to ensure that a tree will not be destroyed by improper pruning. Trees that were planted as a condition of approval by the city ABR, or Planning Commission also require a permit for removal.

A tree located anywhere on a historic property, or a property within either El Pueblo Viejo Landmark District or Brinkerhoff Landmark District requires approval for removal or significant alteration.

*** You do not need a permit to trim or remove a setback tree with a trunk diameter less than four inches measured at a point 4 ½ feet above the ground, or a tree that is dead or diseased, however, this must be verified by inspection by an authorized employee of the City Parks & Recreation Department.**

7. When will the City remove or issue a permit for the removal of a tree in the parkway or street roadway easement?

*** In most cases the City will only remove or permit the removal of dead, seriously diseased, or hazardous trees, upon the inspection and recommendation of the arborist or tree inspector. To request the removal of a street tree or tree located in the minimum front yard you must file a completed Street Tree Removal Request Application or a Front Yard Setback Tree Removal Request Application. These requests are reviewed by city staff, the City Street Tree Advisory Committee, and considered by the City Parks and Recreation Commission for approval or denial.**

8. What if the tree roots are causing serious and expensive damage to the street and sidewalk or are growing into the sewer or water lines that serve my property? Will the City then remove and replace the tree, or give me a permit to do so?

*** Damage to sidewalks and sewer lines are not normally considered justification for removing otherwise healthy and safe street trees. Sidewalk damage is referred to the Streets Division, 564-5413, for sidewalk repair or replacement. Root damage to sewers is usually the result of an old sewer line that allows roots to enter. To avoid repeated root intrusion sewer lines need to be repaired with impervious materials.**

9. What if I want to remove a healthy oak tree or other native tree from my property, do I need a permit from the City?

*** The City does not have a species specific native oak tree preservation ordinance pertaining to trees on private property.**

*** The City does have a front setback tree preservation ordinance that covers all species of trees growing within the private setback area which are healthy and over four inches in trunk diameter measured at 4 ½ feet above ground. To obtain a permit to remove a tree located in the minimum setback area you must complete a Front Yard Setback Tree Removal Request Application which will be reviewed by city staff, the Street Tree Advisory Committee and considered by the Parks & Recreation Commission for approval or denial.**

10. How do I get a tree planted in the empty parkway area in front of my house?

*** The City has a designated tree species for planting along all “improved” city streets; (meaning streets with concrete curbs along the edge of the road). If you want the designated tree species to be planted, please call the Parks Division office at 564-5433. A service request will be made and your request will be placed on a list for future planting. A permit can also be issued for you to plant the city specified tree.**

*** Please do not plant any other tree or shrubs in your parkway without a permit from the City. For safety and access reasons the City must determine what trees and plants are allowable for planting in parkways.**

*** Other than city specified trees, only low growing plants or groundcovers which at maturity will not exceed eight inches in height and will allow light pedestrian traffic to walk across parkway, are approved for private owner parkway planting.**

*** By law, (City ordinance 15.20), the property owner is responsible for maintaining safe, level parkway surfaces, and caring for all plants in the parkway other than city streets. This is essential to assure pedestrian safety and vehicle operator safe visibility across parkways and at all intersections.**

11. How do I get a memorial or commemorative tree planted with a marker?

*** Santa Barbara Beautiful, a local non-profit organization, is authorized to sell commemorative street trees, (either existing trees or trees to be planted in cooperation with City Parks Division), and all orders should be processed thorough SBB by calling 965-8867.**

*** The City Parks and Recreation Department sells and provides markers for trees planted in city parks, through our affiliated non-profit P.A.R.C. Foundation. Inquires and orders for park trees may be processed by contacting Terri Yamada, Parks Division Administrative Assistant at 564-5484. (This program has been suspended and only replacements of existing plaques are processed.)**

12. What can I do if a neighbor’s tree near the property line is blocking my view or drops debris in my yard or has dangerous limbs that may fall onto my property?

***The City Parks and Recreation Department doesn’t mediate such disputes. These are matters that must be resolved between the affected parties. You**

may need the support and assistance of a qualified consulting arborist to resolve such disputes.

*** For your information, the City does have a "View Protection Ordinance" (MC Section 22.76) that establishes a process for reaching a resolution of these situations. The city is not responsible for enforcement of any existing private property codes, covenants, or restrictions which may pertain to vegetation obscuring views. (Please reference "Trees and View" on this web site)**

13. Who is responsible for shrubbery and vegetation other than street trees that grow into public sidewalks or streets?

*** The property owners adjacent to the sidewalk or street is responsible for maintaining plants to keep them from encroaching into street and sidewalks to create an obstruction or limit visibility. Property owners will be noticed by the city to clear the vegetation. Vegetation encroaching into public streets and sidewalks should be reported to the Public Works Department at [564-5388](tel:564-5388).**

14. What can be done if trees are growing into power lines?

*** Low voltage phone and service lines, (SCE or Cable T.V.), are not normally emergency situations and may be cleared during normally scheduled pruning maintenance. The city may clear limbs from city maintained street trees or issue permits for this work if warranted. Trees not maintained by the city are the responsibility of the property owner to correct with proper pruning. Conflicts with high voltage Edison transmission lines are serious and should be specifically reported to the attention of the South California Edison line clearing service representative at [654-7411](tel:654-7411).**