

CITY OF LAGUNA HILLS



CITY COUNCIL POLICY
SUBJECT: TREE PRESERVATION
POLICY No. 315

Effective Date: February 24, 1998
Last Revision: May 27, 2014

PURPOSE:

To establish guidelines for public tree preservation, tree trimming, tree planting and tree removal practices.

BACKGROUND:

Trees are an important asset in the community and their preservation is a goal of the City's General Plan. Maintenance of public trees is performed for the health of the tree, enjoyment of the residents, and for wildlife benefits. As existing trees reach a mature age, the City receives increasing requests for tree trimming and tree removal. This policy is provided to clarify the conditions which the City will utilize to evaluate such requests and establishes procedures to accept donations for tree planting.

The City of Laguna Hills has an estimated 13,000 public trees located in its parks and open spaces and along the public streets. Unfortunately, some poor choices were made in the past as to the selection of tree types, locations of planting and maintenance practices, particularly in narrow residential parkway areas. Many tree species have grown or will grow too large for their settings. The root systems of some trees have caused sidewalks, curbs, and gutters to become damaged or infringed upon private properties. Other species have not thrived well in their Laguna Hills environment and are not healthy specimens.

As a result of these tree growth problems and normal tree maintenance practices, the City's Public Services Department has prepared the Tree Preservation Policy to provide guidance to mitigate the problems and expenses to the community caused by trees while preserving as many trees as possible.

POLICY:

Authorized Tree Trimming:

Laguna Hills is currently on a four to five year tree trimming cycle. Trees are pruned for the following reasons: (1) health maintenance, structural form and safety; (2) to provide vertical clearances in the public right-of-way (trees are raised to 9 feet over sidewalks and 16 feet over streets) for pedestrians and

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vehicles, and (3) to address trees which become larger than is desirable or safe for given site constraints.

Tree trimming involves thinning and raising branches. Thinning out can reduce the height and spread of a tree while retaining its natural shape and is the practice preferred rather than topping. Topping adversely impacts tree structure. Trees will not be topped. Trees will not be trimmed solely for the benefit of views or for litter control.

The appropriate time to fully trim a tree will depend on the type of tree, its condition, and the results desired. Light pruning can be done any time. Broken, dead, weak, or individual branches can be removed with little or no effect on a tree, no matter what time of the year. Generally, however, tree trimming will be scheduled in the Fall/Winter/Spring months.

No person, other than the City, is authorized to trim public trees without an appropriate permit. A tree trimming permit may be issued for the trimming or thinning of a tree only in accordance with guidelines established by the City. If a permit is issued and granted for a private entity to trim a tree, the permit shall be available on-site at all times during trimming activity.

Authorized Tree Removal

Upon request, and for the criteria described below, public trees will be inspected and authorized for removal:

1. Tree is deemed hazardous, diseased and/or declining.
2. Tree is damaging the sidewalk, curb or gutter, and is not receptive to preventative root pruning.
3. The tree and/or its roots are a threat to private property.
4. Trees in conflict with overhead utility lines.

No person, other than the City, is authorized to remove public trees without a permit. Trees will not be removed solely for view enhancement. Tree removal includes stump and root removals in a manner meeting the approval of the City.

For the preservation of these assets, a resident requesting removal of a street tree, that has been justified for removal by the City, will be requested to donate and plant another tree in its place. The size, species type, and location will be specified by the Director of Public Services or his designee. If the resident will not replace the tree, the City will do so provided the tree is determined by the Director of Public Services to enhance the tree preservation goals.

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Unauthorized Tree Removal or Trimming

Any person identified as having removed or trimmed a tree, so as to cause damage to the tree will be responsible for the full cost of replacement of the tree.

Street Tree List

The following list of tree species shall be used by the Director of Public Works or his designee when selecting a replacement tree for street parkways.

Species for 2-3 Foot Parkways, or 2'X2' Cut-Outs

Expected root flare diameter 1' to 1.5 ft. at 40 years

- Lagerstoemia indica "fauriei" (mildew resistant)
Crape Myrtle
- Tristania laurina
Brisbane Box
- Pyrus calleryana "Aristocrat"
Aristocrat Pear
- Cercis occidentalis
Western Redbud

Species for 3-5 Foot Parkways, or 4'X4' Cut-Outs

Expected root flare diameter 1.5' to 2 ft. at 40 years

- Pyrus calleryana "Bradford"
Bradford Pear
- Archontophoenix cunninghamiana
Queen Palm
- Metrosideros excelsus
New Zealand Christmas Tree
- Pistachia chinensis
Chinese Pistache
- Hymenosporum flavum
Sweetshade
- Geijera parviflora
Australian Willow
- Eriobotrya deflexa
Bronze Loquat

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Species for 5-6' Ft. Parkways or 5'X5' Cut-Outs

Expected root flair diameter 2' to 4 ft. at 40 years

- Melaleuca uuinquenervia
Paperbark; cajeput tree
- Geijera parviflora
Australian Willow
- Ulmus parvifolia
Chinese Elm
- Jacaranda acutifolia
Jacaranda
- Brachychiton populneus
Bottle Tree
- Ginkgo biloba (grafted male only)
Ginkgo
- Bauhinia variegata
Purple Orchid Tree
- Pinus eldarica
Mondale Pine
- Tabebuia impetiginosa
Pink Trumpet Tree

Tree Donations

Members of the public are encouraged to donate funding for tree planting to enhance the Citywide tree stock and improve the community. Donations will be accepted on the following basis:

1. Only 15 gallon trees will be planted.
2. The donating individual may request the location of the tree planting but the City shall select the final planting location.
3. The donating individual may request a particular tree species for planting but the City shall select the tree species which best fits the area tree palette, City maintenance obligations and availability of irrigation systems.
4. The tree planting will occur during normal business hours and the donating individual will be invited to attend the tree planting.
5. The fee donation shall be initially set at \$100 per tree donated. The City Manager may adjust this fee as deemed necessary to equal the City's costs.
6. The City shall maintain the tree.

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7. A letter of acknowledgement of the donation shall be issued to the donating individual.
8. No marker or plaque shall be installed at any tree donation location.