

Tree FAQs

1. Can I remove a tree(s) on my property and do I need permission to do so?

There are several criteria taken into account when determining whether or not to approve a tree removal request. First, we look at the tree location:

a) Private property and is NOT on a steep slope (40% or greater).

The property owner must make a request to the City Planning Department to remove the tree. A Planner will visit the site, measure and take pictures of the tree, and research the development to see if there are any tree retention requirements or other provisions. If there are none, then the City will have no objection and will provide a letter with or without conditions for replanting and maintenance.

b) Private property on steep slope.

In general, the City does not allow removal of trees which help stabilize steep slopes. Trees like alder or willow, which do not provide major stabilization, may be removed *with* permission. Larger, trees such as Douglas Fir and Big Leaf Maple, that provide stabilization may NOT be removed except when determined to be hazardous to private property by a certified arborist. There are associated conditions with removal of any tree or vegetation on a steep slope.

c) An open space tract owned by the homeowner.

Most plats place restrictions on tree removal and modification in open space tracts. In general, trees are usually only approved for removal if they have been determined to be hazardous to private property by a certified arborist. In addition, permission must be granted by the homeowner's association. First, make a request to the City Planning Department to remove or modify the tree. A Planner will visit the site, measure and take pictures of the tree, and conduct research to determine if there are any further requirements or if additional information is needed.

d) In Native Growth Protection Areas (NGPA) owned by the homeowner.

In general, the City does not allow removal of trees in NGPAs. The property owner(s) must make a request to the City Planning Department to remove the tree. A written report by a certified arborist or landscape architect must accompany all requests for modification of vegetation in NGPAs. A Planner will visit the site and take pictures of the tree and make a determination with or without conditions for replanting and maintenance.

2. What can I do about a tree or trees that are not on my property?

If the tree is located on:

a) Another private property

The City requires that the owner of the property request and receive permission for removal and/or trimming of trees. Another resident may not remove, trim or disturb trees on property that does not belong to him/her.

b) A Native Growth Protection Area (NGPA) owned by the City

The City is responsible for maintenance of vegetation in City-owned NGPA. As with privately owned NGPA, only trees determined to be hazardous will be approved for removal. In this case, citizens may make a request to the City Public Works Department. A Public Works employee will visit the site and make an assessment of the tree. If it is found to be hazardous, the City will either have the tree removed or give the property owners permission to remove the tree.

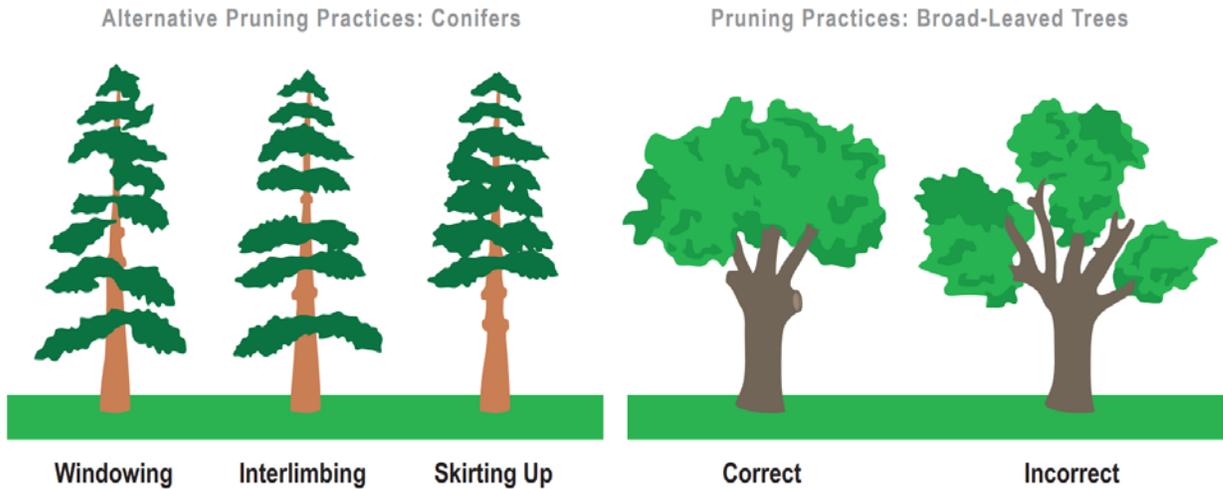
c) City Right-of-Way

Trees within the right-of-way (ROW) are the responsibility of the adjacent property owner to maintain. A ROW permit is required for removal, but removals are regulated the same as on private property.

3. What are the recommended ways to trim trees that cannot be removed?

If the City Planner determines that the tree should not be removed, he/she may recommend a few other options including:

1. **Windowing:** Pruning major limbs that obscure a view, excluding the top third of the tree;
2. **Interlimbing:** Removal of an entire branch or individual branches throughout the canopy, excluding the top third of the tree, to allow more light to pass through as well as reducing wind resistance; and
3. **Skirting-Up:** Limbing the tree from the bottom upward to a maximum of twenty feet from the ground.



4. What is the City’s stance on tree topping?

Topping of trees of any kind, for example to create and or maintain views, is not a recommended practice in the State of Washington. Topping starves trees, creates weak shoots, adds stress to the tree, makes it more susceptible to insects and disease, sunburns the tree, causes poor aesthetics and leads to higher maintenance costs.

For questions or additional information:

Call: (425) 263-8000
Visit us at City Hall: 11930 Cyrus Way, 98275
Hours: Monday – Friday 7:30am-5pm and Fridays to 4:30pm
Online: <https://mukilteowa.gov/departments/planning-development/>
Email: Permittech@mukilteowa.gov

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