

Trees on Private Property

CityPlan

Riley Park/South Cambie RPSC

The urban forest consists of all the trees within the city, trees in parks, along streets and on private property.

Trees are an essential part of the urban environment. They filter polluted air, provide wildlife habitat, control erosion, provide shelter from wind and ultraviolet radiation, buffer noise, hide unwanted sights, soften the harsh urban environment, and make neighbourhoods more beautiful.

City Tree By-law

In 1996, City Council passed the *Private Property Tree By-Law and Guidelines No. 7347*. The latest version of the Tree By-Law was updated on July 22, 2003. The Tree By-Law applies only to trees on private property.

For information on street trees call the Park Board's information line at 604-257-8600 or see the Fact Sheet on Street Trees.

The intention of the Tree By-Law is to ensure that no trees over 8" in diameter are cut without a permit; to encourage the retention of trees whenever possible; and to renew the urban forest through the planting of replacement trees.

The following includes a short summary of the Tree By-Law; for more detailed information, refer to the text of the actual by-law.

Tree By-law Provisions

The Tree By-Law addresses only private property trees which are 20 centimetres (8 inches) or greater in diameter measured 1.4 metres (4.5 feet) above the ground.

A permit is required to remove any tree on private property (called a Tree Removal and Replacement Permit).

A permit is required whether the property is being developed or not. In general, trees that are cut must be replaced.

Different regulations apply for the removal of a single tree or multiple trees.

Any person who commits an offence against the Tree By-law is liable to a minimum fine of \$5,000 and a maximum fine of \$20,000 per tree.

Tree removal application forms are available at <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/com/msvcs/planning/treebylaw/pdf/treeapp.pdf>

Tree permits are issued at the Landscape Tree Review Counter, East Wing of City Hall, 2675 Yukon Street, Second Floor.

Single Tree Removal

To obtain a permit for the removal of a single tree, the following is required:

1. A sketch of the property showing dimensions of the lot; the location of the street, the house and all other buildings on the lot; the location and type of tree being removed, the replacement tree, and all other trees on the lot.
2. A fee of \$45, which is charged for the removal of one tree per year.

Multiple Tree Removal

To remove more than one tree in a twelve month period, one of the following four criteria must be met:

- a) the trees are located within the building envelope (the area where the house can be constructed), a

proposed garage or other accessory building. This criteria applies only when a building permit is being issued;

- b) the trees are dead or dying;
- c) the trees are dangerously close to utility wires and cannot be pruned; or
- d) the tree roots are interfering with drainage or sewer system.

To obtain a tree permit for multiple tree removal, the following is required:

1. A tree plan of the property showing all trees to be retained, all trees being removed and all trees to be planted in replacement. The plan must identify the number, location, species and size of these trees.
2. An arborist's report certifying the reason for removing the trees.
3. A non-refundable application fee of \$45.00 for the first tree and \$74.00 for each subsequent tree within a 12 month period.

In general, all trees to be removed must be replaced with appropriate trees on the property. Some exceptions apply; they are detailed in the Tree By-law.

Replacement Trees

Replacement trees are those planted on the property to make up for the trees that are removed. The Tree By-law contains several tables that detail possible choices for replacement trees, as well as the minimum size required at the time of planting. There is also a table showing the maximum number of trees required in relation to property size.

Which Kind of Trees to Plant

Whenever a new tree is planted, careful consideration should be given to its size at maturity. Many beautiful trees are removed or severely pruned when planted under utility lines or in spaces that have proven to be too small for them.

The Tree By-law contains extensive lists of suitable replacement trees. Nurseries are also good information sources on tree selection, planting techniques and appropriate locations for planting.

Native Trees

Many tree species native to the Lower Mainland are not suitable as street trees but grow well on private properties. Native trees in the city provide a visual link to the region, as well as provide habitat compatible with native wildlife.

When choosing native trees be careful to select the correct size of tree for your lot. Some native trees may be too large for smaller city lots.

Alternatives to Removing Trees

To encourage tree retention where possible and appropriate, the Planning Department has assembled the "Tree Retention, Relocation and Replacement Guidelines". This publication is available from the Landscape Tree Review Counter, located on the 2nd floor of the East Wing of City Hall.

The following brief discussion provides additional ideas for retention in situations commonly found in Vancouver.

Tree Health and Safety

Often, large trees are cut down because the homeowner is afraid that windstorms will cause the tree to fall on the house. A certified arborist can assess the health and safety of the tree.

In many cases, a less drastic but

effective alternative is to carefully prune the tree so that the wind goes through the canopy. It is akin to cutting holes into a sail. This technique can substantially reduce the risk while keeping the tree.

View Blockage

Similarly, trees that block views can often be pruned to open up the view without removing the tree. This should not be confused with the undesirable practice of topping trees which destroys the beauty and health of the tree. Trees should never be topped. Again, the advice of a certified arborist is essential.

You can obtain a list of certified arborists from the International Society of Arboriculture at <http://www.isa-arbor.com/> or call the Tree Info Line at 604-871-6378.

Tree Relocation

Occasionally, trees can be successfully moved to a different location on the property. Local companies can move trees up to ten metres (thirty-three feet) in height.

Construction

Sometimes, a tree is in the way of construction when a new house is built or an existing house is being renovated. In these cases, the Director of Planning has the authority to relax some provisions of the Zoning and Development Bylaw regarding the siting of the building if this saves the tree. To find out if this applies to your situation, call the Tree Info Line 604-871-6378.

Barriers

Where trees are to be retained on or adjacent to a development site, procedures must be followed to adequately protect trees during development. Included among the procedures is the erection of protection barriers or temporary fences, at least 1.2 m high, around the trees to be retained. Call the Tree Info Line 604-871-6378 for more information.

All street boulevard trees adjacent to a construction site are to be protected.

Please refer to the Engineering Department Guidelines "Protection of Boulevard Trees" or call 604-257-8600 for more information.

Other publications that are available at the Landscape Tree Review Counter are :

- Street Trees - Tree Care and You
- Tree By-Law Summary
- Planting Near Powerlines

The Vancouver Tree Trust

The Vancouver Tree Trust has been initiated to support city programs which emphasize community partnerships in the planting and conservation of trees. Through monetary and in-kind contributions, Tree Trust partners will be a key component in the success of these programs and provide support for existing community programs that are underfunded, yet highly regarded by the public. Tree Trust partners include the City, residential communities, businesses and property developers.

Programs funded through the Tree Trust:

The highly successful 1996/1997 tree planting programs included planting 3,000 trees on private property, helping to restore remnant woodlands and planting trees in playgrounds to help shade the children.

In 1998 and 1999 the City launched a number of exciting Tree Trust programs such as the *Right Tree, Right Place*, a revised *Tree Voucher* program, *Tree Stewardship*, and *Tree Walks*. Together these unique programs help educate the public about tree planting, encourage tree planting on private property and provide a variety of exciting projects that contribute to our city. Brochures are available at City Hall.

For more call the City of Vancouver Tree Hotline at 604 871- 6378

**Source Planning Department,
City of Vancouver**