



Public Information


County of Ventura • Resource Management Agency • Planning Division
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Tree Protection Ordinance


Trees add to the beauty and property values of residential areas as well as contribute to historic preservation, wildlife habitat, shade and air quality. The Ventura County Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance regulates the removal, trimming of branches or roots, or grading or excavating within the root zone of a "protected tree." Altering or removing a tree without the required permit is punishable as an infraction or a misdemeanor. Costs for replacing trees may also be charged to the landowner or responsible party.

The Ordinance establishes standards for who may trim a protected tree and how trees can be trimmed. As a general rule, you should check with the Ventura County Planning Division before removing, trimming or grading/trenching around a protected tree. You may obtain a complete copy of the Tree Protection Ordinance, as well as lists of approved tree trimmers and arborists and brochures on tree care and preservation, by visiting the Ventura County Planning Division's website at www.ventura.org/rma/planning.


What Trees Are Protected?

 Any oak or sycamore tree with a single trunk measuring 9.5 inches or more in girth (circumference) is protected; oak trees with two or more trunks are protected when at least one of the trunks is 6.25 inches in girth. Measurements are taken 4.5 feet above the ground.

 Any tree with a single trunk girth of 90 inches or more, or with multiple trunks, two of which add up to 72 inches in girth, is protected as a Heritage Tree; however, please note certain types of trees may not qualify as Heritage Trees unless they are 60 feet tall or 75 years old, e.g. palm trees.

 Any **Historical Tree**, regardless of size or species, is protected. A tree or group of trees may be classified as historic because it is:

- Identified as a landmark by the County or City
- Identified on the Federal or California Historic Resources Inventory to be of historic or cultural significance
- Contributing to a site or structure of historic or cultural significance

 Several other species are protected if they are growing in a Scenic Highway Protection Overlay Zone or Scenic Resource Protection Overlay Zone and are 9.5 inches or more in girth.

Where Does the Ordinance Apply?

The ordinance applies to all unincorporated areas of Ventura County on both public and private property (not applicable in the Coastal Zone).

Does the Ordinance Apply to "Introduced" (deliberately planted) Trees?

Yes, if the trees meet one or more of the aforementioned standards as a "protected tree."

Does the Ordinance Apply to Tree Farms & Nurseries growing "Protected Trees?"

No, the alteration, felling, or removal of a Protected Tree may be carried out if the tree is planted grown or held for sale by lawfully established nurseries and tree farms pursuant to Sec. 8107-25.4.

When Can Protected Trees be Removed?

Trees which are dead, threaten public safety or property, or the health of other protected trees, can be removed fairly quickly if the property owner can demonstrate the need for a tree's removal.

When Can Protected Trees be Trimmed?

Trimming can occur when necessary but will require permits if the work is significant. Please check with the Planning Division before doing any trimming. While modest pruning may occur without a permit, International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) pruning practices must always be used to protect the tree's health. No climbing spurs can be used by the tree trimmers.

What are ISA Standards?

The International Society of Arboriculture sets tree trimming standards to protect the health of trees. Qualified Tree Trimmers (QTT's) are required to be familiar with the standards.

Who May Work on Protected Trees?

The property owner (or property resident, with the owner's written consent) or a Qualified Tree Trimmer (QTT) may work on a tree. Anyone may remove a tree once the Planning Division grants approval. All QTT's must be certified and registered with the Planning Division. Property owners should insist on seeing a QTT's county certification before work is done on protected trees. For information on certification of QTT's, please call the Planning Division at (805) 654-2451, or visit our website at www.ventura.org/rma/planning.

What Types of Permits are Required to Work on Protected Trees?

Limited trimming of small limbs can be done without permits if specific standards are met. Trimming of large limbs or other alteration is usually approved with an over-the-counter tree permit which currently costs from \$100.

When are Mitigation Offsets Required?

When healthy trees are removed without permits, the responsible party will usually be required to pay for the loss or replace the tree(s) with other trees. Mitigation is also required when a development project removes trees. Mitigation offsets are based on the square inches of cross-sectional area of the tree trunk.

Where Do I Obtain a Tree Permit?

Tree permits are available from the Ventura County Planning Division in the Hall of Administration at the Ventura County Government Center, 800 South Victoria Avenue, Ventura. Requirements include a complete application and filing fee. Other objective data or documentation, such as photographs and arborist's reports, may also be required.

More Information About Protected Trees

There are numerous books on tree care to be found in libraries and bookstores. Nurseries that raise trees would also have information, as would arborists; both are listed in the phone book. The Planning Division has a brochure on the care of oak trees. Further information may be obtained from the Farm Advisor's Office (UC Coop Extension).

General Care and Maintenance of Oaks

Oaks are perhaps the most sensitive of the protected trees. Trenching and grading the ground beneath the tree canopy should always be avoided (and requires a permit if done).

Compacting the ground over the roots by driving over the area or storing heavy items in the area is also harmful to the root zone. Over-watering or allowing water to pond within ten feet of the tree trunk is damaging.

