

Pruning and Removal of Public Trees Procedure



PROCEDURE REFERENCES

EDRMS number	A497893
Policy owner	Community Policy & Resources Manager
Date adopted	20 August 2014
Review due	August 2017
Associated documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reserve Management Plans• Gisborne District Combined Regional Land and District Plan

1. INTRODUCTION

Gisborne District Council ("Council") looks after over 4,730 street trees and areas of vegetation planted on road reserve within the city and rural townships. There are countless other trees and areas of vegetation in public parks in our district.

Trees and vegetation provide a number of benefits in public spaces including:

- contributing to the health and wellbeing of the community;
- cooling the streets and the city;
- helping prevent water pollution and soil erosion;
- providing shade;
- providing a habitat for native birds; and
- creating attractive spaces.

These benefits are important in an increasingly urbanised world.

However, trees and vegetation are a living resource and their care requires ongoing decisions regarding maintenance, replacement, renewal, and removal to minimise problems with properties, services and infrastructure as the trees and vegetation grow. Council staff who work in these fields include the Rivers & Land Drainage, Commercial Operations and Parks and Community Property teams and are skilled professionals that apply best practice health and safety in all aspects of managing our natural assets. This includes engaging the right specialist services when required.

2. PROCEDURE SCOPE

This Pruning and Removal of Public Trees Procedure ("the Procedure") applies to all trees and landscape vegetation that are owned and/or managed by Council. For the purposes of this Procedure, these trees and landscape vegetation are referred to as public trees. A public tree includes any tree or landscaped vegetation which has any part of its trunk growing from Council administered land that is accessible to the public. This excludes, for example, the Waipaoa Flood Protection area, which is Council land, but is closed to the Public.

Trees that were intentionally planted for harvest are excluded from the Procedure. The Procedure covers instances where the request to remove public trees is initiated by Council or by any other individual or group within the community.

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Procedure is to:

- clarify the circumstances in which public trees may be pruned (outside of best practice maintenance) or removed;
- designate a process for making decisions on the removal of public trees and non-standard maintenance; and
- identify when public consultation on pruning or removal of public trees will be undertaken.

4. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER COUNCIL DOCUMENTS

Reserve Management Plans

Where a reserve management plan has specific policy for the management of public trees on a particular reserve, the management plan will take precedence over this Procedure. All new management plans will be developed in consideration of this Procedure and its intent.

District Plan

Any regulatory provision of the District Plan regarding the maintenance and management of public trees takes precedence over this Procedure. Relevant District Plan provisions will be developed in consideration of this Procedure and its intent.

Iwi Management Plans

Hapu and Iwi Management Plans with references to specific public trees will be taken into consideration in decisions on pruning and removal.

5. PRUNING PROVISIONS

All decisions on pruning of public trees are taken by the Parks and Community Property Manager or a nominated delegate. All pruning of public trees will be undertaken by Council's appointed arborist and consistent with best practice. Harvesting of plant species for cultural purposes (e.g. harakeke, pingao and toetoe for weaving) is an exception to this requirement as it is recognised as a customary activity for Maori.

To ensure that Council's public trees are managed sustainably, the following requirements regarding pruning shall be complied with:

5.1 Standard Maintenance Pruning

Public trees are pruned as part of the Council's ongoing maintenance programme to maintain the health, amenity and ecological values of the public trees. There are other reasons where pruning is necessary, for example, if public trees are causing health and safety risks by:

- obstructing footpaths or roads;
- obscuring street lighting;
- obstructing vehicle access to public areas;
- obscuring traffic signage and visibility at intersections; and/or
- growing within clearance requirements around power cables.

5.2 Discretionary Pruning

Council will consider other reasons for pruning, e.g. the lack of views, shade and leaf litter provided that the health and value of the public tree is not compromised and the amenity and ecological value the public tree provides is not compromised. Any pruning is to be carried out by a suitably qualified arborist at the direction of the Parks and Community Property Manager or their nominated delegate. The cost of pruning for these reasons will be the responsibility of the person making the request.

6. REMOVAL PROVISIONS

To ensure that Council's public trees are managed sustainably, public trees will only be removed with the approval of the Parks and Community Property Manager or nominated delegate.

The following requirements regarding removal shall be complied with:

6.1 Removal Not Considered

Council will not remove public trees where those specific public trees are clearly identified for retention in a Reserve Management Plan, the District Plan, Regional Pest Management Strategy or other Council planning document that has undergone community consultation.

6.2 Standard Removal

Public trees will be removed immediately at Council cost where they are:

- identified for removal or replacement in a Reserve Management Plan, the District Plan, Regional Pest Management Strategy or other Council planning document that has undergone community consultation;
- presenting an immediate and significant danger to people or property, or are shown to be potentially a severe health or safety risk to neighbouring residents as identified by the International Society of Arboriculture Tree Hazard Evaluation Method (Appendix 1);
- in a diseased, dying, senescent or vandalised condition which cannot be improved by treatment (unless it is deemed they must remain in the landscape for habitat provision or other purposes); and/or
- causing uncontrollable structural damage to any street or utility service and remedial work to prevent further damage is impractical and/or greater than the value of the tree as assessed by a suitably qualified Council arborist using best practice tree evaluation methods.

6.3 Discretionary Removal

Outside 6.1 and 6.2, requests for removal of public trees may be considered if:

- the requested works constitute good arboricultural practice;
- if it can be proven that the tree is having a detrimental effect on infrastructure, property, human health and safety;
- all viable alternative options have been explored and have failed to remedy the concerns; and/or
- any other relevant circumstance.

Decisions on removal of public trees will be based on:

- the value of the public tree as determined by a suitably qualified Council arborist using best practice tree evaluation methods;
- the level of support for removal from residents living in the immediate vicinity of the public tree; and
- the proximity of the public tree from the property of the requesting party and the length of time the party has had the property.

The cost of assessment and/or removal will be the responsibility of the person making the request.

7. COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

7.1 No consultation

There will be no community consultation on public tree removal where:

- the public tree is removed under 6.2 above;
- the public tree would not be deemed by a suitably qualified Council arborist to have significant value under best practice tree evaluation methods; and
- the public tree removal would have no more than a minor impact on the landscape of the area in the medium to long term.

7.2 Consultation

Where a public tree proposed for removal is identified as having significant value, as determined by a suitably qualified Council arborist using best practice tree evaluation methods, Council will consult the general public about options for dealing with the public tree. The extent of notification and consultation will be proportionate to the value of the public tree as determined by the Parks and Community Property Manager or their nominated delegate.

Where there is some evidence that a public tree proposed for removal may have significant value to Maori, Council will consult with iwi/hapu on options for dealing with the public tree. This provision outweighs Provision 7.1.

Authorised by

Date of approval

APPENDIX 1 – ISA Tree Hazard Evaluation Method



A Photographic Guide to the Evaluation of Hazard Trees in Urban Areas **TREE HAZARD EVALUATION FORM** 2nd Edition

Site/Address: _____
 Map/Location: _____
 Owner: public _____ private _____ unknown _____ other _____
 Date: _____ Inspector: _____
 Date of last inspection: _____

HAZARD RATING:						
_____	+	_____	+	_____	=	_____
Failure Potential		Size of part		Target Rating		Hazard Rating
_____ Immediate action needed						
_____ Needs further inspection						
_____ Dead tree						

TREE CHARACTERISTICS

Tree #: _____ Species: _____
 DBH: _____ # of trunks: _____ Height: _____ Spread: _____
 Form: generally symmetric minor asymmetry major asymmetry stump sprout stag-headed
 Crown class: dominant co-dominant intermediate suppressed
 Live crown ratio: _____ % Age class: young semi-mature mature over-mature/senescent
 Pruning history: crown cleaned excessively thinned topped crown raised pollarded crown reduced flush cuts cabled/braced
 none multiple pruning events Approx. dates: _____
 Special Value: specimen heritage/historic wildlife unusual street tree screen shade indigenous protected by gov. agency

TREE HEALTH

Foliage color: normal chlorotic necrotic Epicormics? Y N Growth obstructions:
 Foliage density: normal sparse Leaf size: normal small stakes wire/ties signs cables
 Annual shoot growth: excellent average poor Twig Dieback? Y N curb/pavement guards
 Woundwood development: excellent average poor none other _____
 Vigor class: excellent average fair poor
 Major pests/diseases: _____

SITE CONDITIONS

Site Character: residence commercial industrial park open space natural woodland/forest
 Landscape type: parkway raised bed container mound lawn shrub border wind break
 Irrigation: none adequate inadequate excessive trunk wetted
 Recent site disturbance? Y N construction soil disturbance grade change line clearing site clearing
 % dripline paved: 0% 10-25% 25-50% 50-75% 75-100% Pavement lifted? Y N
 % dripline w/ fill soil: 0% 10-25% 25-50% 50-75% 75-100%
 % dripline grade lowered: 0% 10-25% 25-50% 50-75% 75-100%
 Soil problems: drainage shallow compacted droughty saline alkaline acidic small volume disease center history of fail
 clay expansive slope _____° aspect: _____
 Obstructions: lights signage line-of-sight view overhead lines underground utilities traffic adjacent veg. _____
 Exposure to wind: single tree below canopy above canopy recently exposed windward, canopy edge area prone to windthrow
 Prevailing wind direction: _____ Occurrence of snow/ice storms never seldom regularly

TARGET

Use Under Tree: building parking traffic pedestrian recreation landscape hardscape small features utility lines
 Can target be moved? Y N Can use be restricted? Y N
 Occupancy: occasional use intermittent use frequent use constant use

The International Society of Arboriculture assumes no responsibility for conclusions or recommendations derived from use of this form.

TREE DEFECTS

ROOT DEFECTS:

Suspect root rot: Y N Mushroom/conk/bracket present: Y N ID: _____

Exposed roots: severe moderate low Undermined: severe moderate low

Root pruned: _____ distance from trunk Root area affected: _____% Buttress wounded: Y N When: _____

Restricted root area: severe moderate low Potential for root failure: severe moderate low

LEAN: _____ deg. from vertical natural unnatural self-corrected Soil heaving: Y N

Decay in plane of lean: Y N Roots broken Y N Soil cracking: Y N

Compounding factors: _____ Lean severity: severe moderate low

CROWN DEFECTS: Indicate presence of individual defects and rate their severity (s = severe, m = moderate, l = low)

DEFECT	ROOT CROWN	TRUNK	SCAFFOLDS	BRANCHES
Poor taper				
Bow, sweep				
Codominants/forks				
Multiple attachments				
Included bark				
Excessive end weight				
Cracks/splits				
Hangers				
Girdling				
Wounds/seam				
Decay				
Cavity				
Conks/mushrooms/bracket				
Bleeding/sap flow				
Loose/cracked bark				
Nesting hole/bee hive				
Deadwood/stubs				
Borers/termites/ants				
Cankers/galls/burrs				
Previous failure				

HAZARD RATING

Tree part most likely to fail: _____

Inspection period: _____ annual _____ biannual _____ other _____

Failure Potential + Size of Part + Target Rating = Hazard Rating

_____ + _____ + _____ = _____

Failure potential: 1 - low; 2 - medium; 3 - high; 4 - severe

Size of part: 1 - <6" (15 cm); 2 - 6-18" (15-45 cm);

3 - 18-30" (45-75 cm); 4 - >30" (75 cm)

Target rating: 1 - occasional use; 2 intermittent use;

3 - frequent use; 4 - constant use

HAZARD ABATEMENT

Prune: remove defective part reduce end weight crown clean thin raise canopy crown reduce restructure shape

Cable/Brace: _____ Inspect further: root crown decay aerial monitor

Remove tree: Y N Replace? Y N Move target: Y N Other: _____

Effect on adjacent trees: none evaluate

Notification: owner manager governing agency Date: _____

COMMENTS

APPENDIX 2 – Decision Making Flow Diagram

