



CITY OF CALISTOGA

PLANNING & BUILDING DEPARTMENT

Planning Division

1232 Washington Street, Calistoga, CA 94515
(707) 942-2763 | planning@calistogaca.gov | calistogaca.gov

TREE REMOVAL AND PROTECTION

INFORMATION GUIDE | CMC CHAPTER 19.01

Ask before you act. A permit can be required even when the tree will remain. Trenching, grading, paving, compaction, equipment access, storage, irrigation changes and construction inside the root protection zone may be regulated disturbances.

Which trees are protected?

- Any tree greater than 12 inches in diameter at breast height (DBH).
- Any native oak greater than 6 inches DBH.
- Every Valley Oak, including a seedling, sapling or older tree.
- Any tree designated by the City Council as a heritage or landmark tree.
- Any tree containing an active nest of a fully protected bird species under California Fish and Game Code § 3511.

How do I take measurements?

- Measure trunk diameter 54 inches above the ground on the high side of the tree.
- For a multitrunk tree, add the diameter of every trunk measured at that height.
- If you measure circumference, divide by 3.142 to estimate diameter.
- The root protection zone (RPZ) radius equals the tree's largest dripline radius plus 50 percent.

What trees or activities are exempt from requiring a permit?

- Trees that do not meet the protected tree requirements.
- Trees determined by a Police, Fire, or Public Works representative to be hazardous to life or property.
- Trees trimmed, braced, or cut back by a public utility.

*To request an emergency exemption, provide clear photographs and any available documentation showing the tree's location, condition and immediate risk.

When is a permit required?

- Removing, cutting down, poisoning, girdling or otherwise killing a protected tree.
- Excavation, trenching, grading, root cutting, structures or impervious cover within the RPZ of a protected tree(s).
- Driving or parking vehicles or equipment, compacting soil, or storing materials within the RPZ of a tree(s).
- Changing irrigation or drainage; applying damaging chemicals; placing signs; burning; locating toilets or washout; or installing septic/leach facilities where roots may be harmed.

When may a permit be issued?

- Tree removal or disturbance is authorized by or local, County, State or Federal law.
- A qualified arborist determines the tree is hazardous, dead or hopelessly diseased.
- The work concerns trees grown for commercial orchard or tree-farm purposes.
- The applicant demonstrates economic hardship.

When may a permit be denied?

- City staff may find that there is a reasonable redesign or alternative that can protect the tree.
- A heritage/landmark tree cannot be removed without City Council approval.
- A tree permit will not be granted before other required project permits are approved.

Can I appeal the City's decision?

- An interested person may appeal the City's decision to the City Council within 10 days. The Council considers the matter anew.



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What is the application & review process?

- Submit the Tree Removal & Protection application, including the fee/deposit, site plan, photographs, owner consent and supporting evidence. An arborist report is not automatically required, but the City may obtain technical review at the applicant's expense.
- The application is reviewed by all relevant city departments. After an application is complete, the City inspects the site within 10 days and provides a written decision within 15 days.
- If issued, the permit is valid for 30 days unless extended in writing. Post it conspicuously before work and keep it posted during the work.
- Replacement trees may be inspected annually until established.

What is a Tree Protection Plan?

- A Tree Protection Plan is required with discretionary projects and other permits affecting protected trees.
- It must identify all protected trees whose RPZ lies within 20 feet of activity and address fencing, construction access, excavation, grading, utilities, storage, irrigation, drainage, landscaping and monitoring.
- The plan is designed or reviewed by an arborist retained by the City at the applicant's expense.

What are the protective fencing requirements?

- Fencing is required around each protected tree within or immediately adjacent to the work area before any site work.
- Place fencing at the outer edge of the RPZ and maintain it until the work is complete.
- Use 5-foot wire fencing or 40-inch orange plastic fencing unless the approved plan or permit specifies otherwise.

Are there any additional requirements?

- A permit may require replacement planting, restoration, monitoring and a performance bond or other security.
- The permit and current department guidelines will establish replacement species, size, location, planting deadline, irrigation, inspection and release conditions.
- Do not assume a fixed replacement ratio or deposit amount; follow the written permit conditions and current City fee schedule.

Do I need a separate encroachment permit if the work will be in the public right of way?

- Work in or over a street, sidewalk or other public right-of-way may separately require an encroachment permit and traffic/pedestrian-control plan.
- The permits can be turned in at the same time to the Planning and Building Department. The encroachment permit will be routed to Public Works and will be issued from their office.

What if the tree is in near the street or in the street right-of-way?

- An adjoining property owner is responsible for maintaining trees in the public right-of-way adjacent to their property, including removal of hazardous trees.
- Any tree work within the public right-of-way requires a permit and an encroachment permit.