



Planning Department
CLIENT ASSISTANCE MEMO

Can I Cut Down or Trim Trees?

Do I Need City Approval?

- The City strongly recommends calling the Planning Department prior to thinning or removing any trees. This memo serves as a general guide and may not apply to all situations.
- You may remove dying and dangerous trees upon the recommendation of a certified arborist and with City approval. You must keep the understory shrubs and groundcover, except for invasive species.
- If you remove a tree without prior City approval, you may be subject to a code enforcement investigation and potential fines.

Thinning:

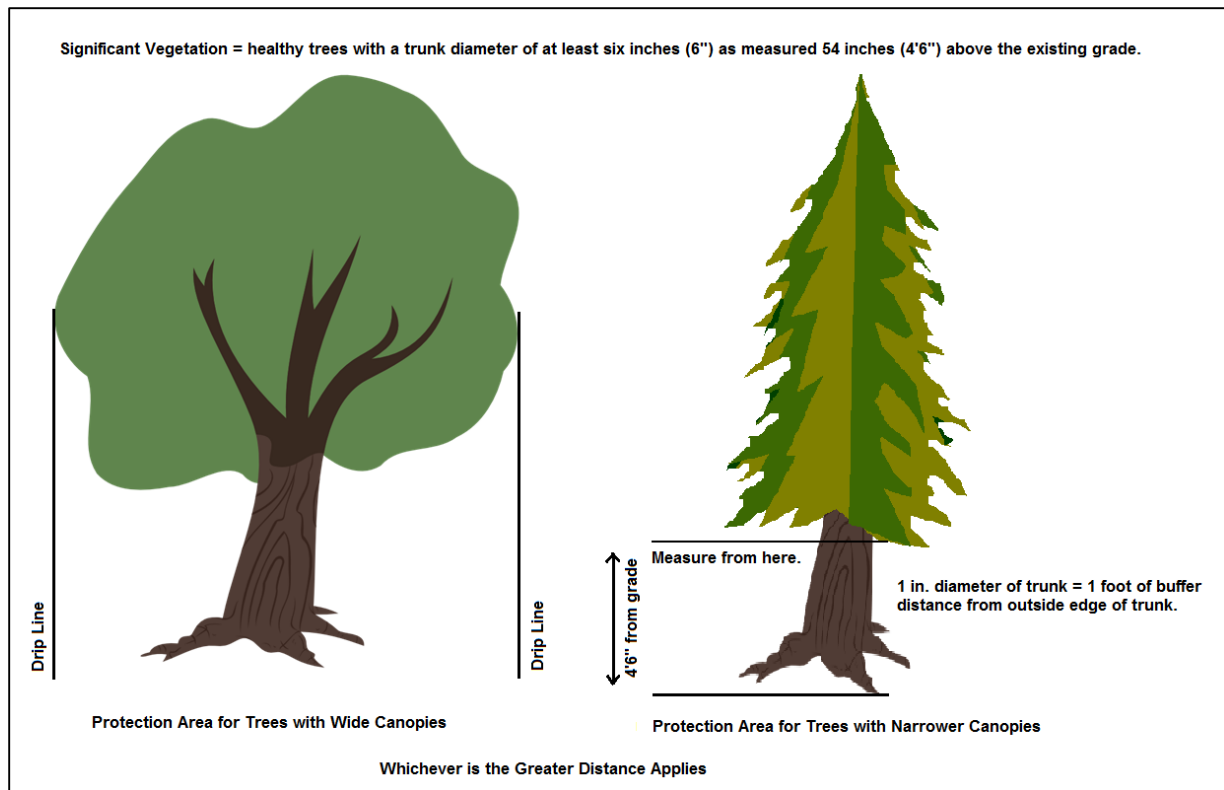
- Thinning is the act of removing select trees in native vegetation areas.
- You may thin saplings to avoid overcrowding as long as the existing trees are healthy and full.
- Trees may be thinned to 12 to 15 feet on center, though you must first seek City approval. (See GHMC 17.99.240G)

Trimming:

- Tree trimming must preserve the tree's natural symmetry.
- Topping is prohibited unless recommended by an ISA Certified Arborist for health or safety reasons and requires City approval. (See GHMC 17.99.240(F))
- Limbing-up must retain sufficient crown to preserve the tree's fullness and health.

Tree Removal:

- If a tree is removed that is required to be retained by City codes, you must replace the tree with a tree of a similar species at the following ratio (See GHMC 17.99.240(E)):
 - three six-foot trees, or
 - one 18-foot tree, or
 - one 12-foot plus one six-foot tree.



Where Can I Build Near Significant Vegetation?

Limits within Drip Line: You must protect significant trees from the drip line in to the trunk. You may not perform any construction activity inside the drip line. You may be able to take certain actions, such as installing impervious or compactible surface inside the drip line, if those actions are recommended by a certified arborist.

Changes in Grade: You may not change the grade level around a significant tree in a way might endanger the tree's health. If you are changing the grade level outside the drip line, you must construct a dry rock wall or rock well around the tree. The diameter of this wall or well must be capable of protecting the tree. Proof of professional design may be required.

How is the Drip Line Measured?

The drip line is measured in two ways, depending on the growth habit of the tree. The drip line that applies to your tree is whichever of the following results in a greater distance.

For Wide Canopies: The drip line is measured as a line extending from the extreme reach of a tree's branches down to the ground.

For Narrow Canopies: The drip line is a buffer distance extending in a circle measuring one foot in distance from the trunk for every one inch in diameter of the trunk. The diameter is measured 54 inches (4' 6") from the existing grade. (See GMHC 17.99.590 and graphic above).

Client Assistance Memos are not intended to replace the Gig Harbor Municipal Code. Should you have any questions regarding this information please call the Planner of the Day at (253) 851-6170.

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