



Looking after our trees

Hutt City Council's Tree Maintenance Policy



Asset Services Group

Mature trees are an attractive feature throughout Hutt City. They make the city more beautiful and add value to your property. By looking after the trees, we are conserving our natural environment.

Hutt City Council's tree maintenance policy

Hutt City Council is committed to providing and maintaining trees on Council land.

Trees in urban areas can sometimes cause problems such as shading, loss of views and leaf litter, so this brochure outlines your rights and obligations.

This policy does not cover trees on private property, or trees and vegetation in native bush reserves. See Council's District Plan for more information (available from Council Service Centres and online at www.huttcity.info).

What will Council do to maintain trees on Council land?

Hutt City Council will carry out routine maintenance on trees to keep them in good shape. Dead or diseased branches will be removed, and trees will be pruned where they are:

- overhanging private property
- obstructing footpaths
- obscuring street lights
- extending over the street
- growing too close to power and telephone lines.

What Council won't do

The Council will not remove a tree unless it is absolutely necessary. There is a section dealing with the removal of trees later in this pamphlet.



Council pruning practices

Trees will be maintained as naturally as possible using acceptable pruning methods. These include crown lifting, where the lower branches of the tree are cut away, and crown thinning, where branches are removed to open out the tree and let more light through.

Only qualified arborists are contracted to carry out work on Council trees.

What about topping trees?



Council staff will not carry out topping of trees. Topping involves trimming the top layer off the tree and it tends to result in thick growth in a short time. It is internationally recognised as an unsound practice.

V-pruning, which leaves a V-like shape in the tree, is now used instead of topping, for example, when branches are growing too close to power or telephone lines.

When can a tree be removed?

Council will look at all available options, including pruning, before it considers removing a tree. Trees on council land can only be removed:

- if the tree is dead, diseased, dying or a danger to people or property
- if the tree is causing structural damage to streets or utility services, for example, sewerage pipes
- if the tree is causing a traffic safety problem by reducing visibility
- for the preservation of other trees
- to harvest trees planted for revenue
- for the maintenance of other Council land.

Trees are excluded from this if they are:

- listed as notable under the District Plan
- identified in a reserve management plan as an integral part of the reserve
- on historic, scenic, scientific or nature reserves.

What if a tree is affecting my property? Can it be removed then?

If you have a problem with a tree, please contact Council. But remember, there has to be a very good reason to remove a tree.

Generally, trees will not be removed for preservation of views, shade or leaf litter.

Leaf litter is often a problem in urban areas, but is not sufficient reason for the removal of a tree.

However, there are exceptions relating to views and shade.

- If new trees are planted and subsequently affect views of long term residents or significantly shade their property, Council may decide to remove the trees.
- A resident might move into a property when the trees are below the view-line and are not significantly shading the property. If tree growth changes this, Council will carry out thinning work to reduce the shading or reinstate views as far as practically possible.
- If a new resident moves into a property, they must accept the size and height of neighbouring Council trees. Council is not required to remove or prune a tree for views or shade beyond that level. If Council does prune it back further, then the resident will contribute to, or pay all the costs.
- If, after the Council has pruned a tree, the resident still loses 50 per cent of sunlight at the winter solstice, the tree will be removed.



What about damage to property?

- Please notify Council of any damage caused by a tree to private property. We will take immediate steps to prevent the damage getting any worse and will contribute to the costs involved.
- Contact Council if you would like to plant a tree on Council land. If you plant a tree without written consent, you will be liable for any damage to property.
- Property owners should take care to ensure any paving or other services they install will not be affected by existing trees.

What if a tree has pests or a disease?

Council will take whatever measures are appropriate to control pests and diseases on their trees. Affected residents will be advised if chemical sprays are going to be used.

What if I don't agree with Council's decisions?

If you object to maintenance work being carried out on a tree you can:

- Approach the contractor doing the work and discuss the matter.
- If you're unhappy with the contractor's decision, or the contractor is no longer there, you can contact Hutt City Council's Horticulture Asset Manager on 570 6710.
- If you're not satisfied with the Asset Manager's decision, you can take the matter to Council by writing a letter of complaint.

When Council wants to remove a tree, adjacent neighbours on both sides of the street will be informed by letter. If there is opposition from neighbours, the Horticulture Asset Manager will become involved. If the dispute cannot be resolved, it will be referred to the relevant Community Board or Ward Committee.

What about new tree plantings?

When new street trees are planted, Council is careful to choose appropriate species for the location. For example, it will not plant trees with invasive roots near underground services.

Council is always looking for ways to improve its services. It will make use of any new technology available, for example, new root barrier systems for street trees.





Contact

For more information or a full copy of the Tree Maintenance Policy, please contact:

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Private Bag 31-912
Lower Hutt

Tel: **04-570 6666**, fax **04-569 4290**

Email: contact@huttcity.govt.nz

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or the Horticulture Asset Manager

Tel: **04-570 6710**



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