

## Replacement Town of Reading – Conservation Commission Tree Removal Policy

The Conservation Commission is responsible for protecting the Town's natural resources, including lakes, rivers, ponds, streams, vernal pools, wetlands, and floodplains. Under State and Town bylaws and regulations, any work within or impacting a resource area, including tree removal, requires review and permission from the Conservation Commission or the Conservation Administrator.

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### Tree Removal – Single-Family Homeowners

#### Tree Removal Limits:

- Homeowners may request removal of up to four trees, subject to review and approval by the Conservation Administrator.
- Trees determined to be dead by the Conservation Administrator are not included in this count (see *Dead Tree Determination*).
- Removal of five or more trees requires submission of either a **Request for Determination of Applicability** [(link)] or a **Notice of Intent** [(link)].

#### Replacement Requirements:

- Trees removed within 100 feet of a resource area or 200 feet of a river must be replaced according to the Replacement Tree and Shrub Schedule (link).
- If the required replacement ratio cannot be achieved on-site, the Commission may accept a voluntary contribution to the Conservation Commission Fund instead. Funds will be used for tree planting, transplanting, or other tree-related purposes.
- The Commission or its administrator may apply a more stringent standard at its discretion when site conditions warrant such as trees on bank or trees within 25 feet of the wetland.

#### Voluntary Contribution Guidelines:

- **Individual homeowners:** Minimum \$250 per tree; maximum \$500.
  - **All other requests:** Minimum \$250 per tree; maximum determined by the Commission.
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### Replacement Tree and Shrub Policy (Reading Wetlands Protection Bylaw Section 7.1)

1. Plantings within the Buffer Zone or Resource Area must be true native species approved in advance by the Conservation Administrator.
2. A tree six inches or greater in caliper that is cut, leaving a snag 10–15 feet tall above grade, does not require a replacement. Snags provide habitat and food for wildlife.
3. Trees removed without leaving a snag must be replaced according to the Replacement Tree and Shrub Schedule.

4. Replacement plantings must be installed within 180 days of tree removal (or as determined by the Conservation Administrator). Plantings must survive at least three growing seasons. No Certificate of Compliance will be issued until this requirement is met unless an acceptable surety is provided.
5. This policy will be applied consistently with the need to protect the integrity of the Zone of Natural Vegetation or No-Disturb Zone (Section 3D, Reading Wetlands Protection Regulations).

**Importance of Native Species:**

- Replacement trees must be true native species or from the Recommended Native Plant Materials List [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.readingma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/120/Recommended-Native-Plant-Materials-List-PDF](https://www.readingma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/120/Recommended-Native-Plant-Materials-List-PDF).
  - Trees should be 10–15 feet tall with a trunk caliper of 3 inches or more measured at six inches above the root ball.
  - Proper planting instructions can be found at DCR tree planting 101 [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.mass.gov/doc/tree-planting-101-0/download](https://www.mass.gov/doc/tree-planting-101-0/download).
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**How to Request Approval – Single-Family Homeowners (Four Trees or Fewer)**

Applicants may request removal of up to four trees using the Tree Removal Permit.  
<https://readingma.viewpointcloud.com/categories/1096/record-types/6543>

**Steps:**

1. Call or email the Conservation Administrator (781-942-6616 / [ctirone@readingma.gov](mailto:ctirone@readingma.gov)) for guidance on which permit is needed.
2. Complete the online permit and upload:
  - Name, address, and contact information
  - Location of the tree
  - Tree size (DBH and approximate height)
  - Species of the tree
  - Nearby water bodies or wetlands
  - Photo(s) and/or sketch plan showing the tree's location
3. Include a letter from a qualified professional stating the tree poses an immediate threat to property or public safety.
4. Obtain written permission from the Conservation Office before proceeding with removal.

**Dead Tree Determination**

The Conservation Administrator determines whether a tree is dead, based on observable field conditions and accepted arboricultural indicators, using a preponderance of evidence standard.

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**Hazard Trees**

In some situations, one or two trees may pose an imminent hazard to property or public safety and need to be removed before an application can be filed or before the Commission can meet. In these limited cases, the Commission shall follow the Hazardous Tree Protocol.

- For three or more trees, the Emergency Certification procedures in State and Town Wetlands Regulations apply.
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**Hazardous Tree Protocol**

If the tree is located in a Resource Area, within 100 feet of a Resource Area, or within 200 feet of a river, the property owner must:

1. Contact the Conservation Administrator (781-942-6616 / [ctirone@readingma.gov](mailto:ctirone@readingma.gov)).
2. Complete the online Tree Removal Permit, if instructed, and provide:
  - Name, address, and contact information
  - Tree location, size (DBH and approximate height), and species
  - Nearby water body or Resource Area
  - Photo(s) and/or sketch plan showing the tree's location
  - Letter from a qualified professional confirming imminent threat
  - Written (email) permission from the Conservation Office before removal