

Trees in the Penrith City Council Area. Tree Preservation



Why Preserve Trees?

Trees are self optimising living organisms that have a finite life. Individual trees cannot be preserved forever. The term 'preservation' refers to the urban forest or all of the trees in the Penrith Council area. Every single tree contributes to this vital asset and is important. Council is committed to maintaining and increasing the urban forest.

A host of excuses are given for removing or lopping trees in urban areas. These generally cite the "nuisance" factor of trees as the reason for removal. Ironically, those removing trees more often than not are quick to claim that they really like trees.

Modern living in urbanised situations carries with it a high nuisance factor. Motor vehicles are universally used despite their pollution emissions, high purchase and running costs, as well as the costs of maintaining roads. Not to mention the horrific road toll. Yet few of us would do without a car. Similarly, electrical appliances are a necessity despite their high cost, their risk of operation and the ugliness of telegraph poles and electrical wires.

We are a part of the environment. Trees are more important to our environment than many of us are aware. Trees filter dust and pollution from the air, moderate air temperature, reduce stormwater runoff, have a windbreak effect, produce oxygen and reduce stress levels. Trees provide food, homes, shade and shelter to birds and other wildlife. They beautify the area and dramatically improve our landscape.

Yet, these benefits are frequently overlooked when trees become a 'nuisance'. Problems such as leaf drop or extensive growth are sufficient in the eyes of most people to warrant the tree's removal or permanent damage and disfigurement by heavy lopping.

Indigenous native trees are the surviving relics of an areas past thousands of years of natural history. An irreplaceable community resource with so much educational potential deserves better treatment from a society with awakening environmental awareness.

Tree Preservation Orders

A Tree Preservation Order applies to the whole of the Penrith Local Government Area to ensure the long-term survival of the landscape character of the area. It promotes the replanting and good management of trees, whilst prohibiting the ring-barking, cutting down, pruning, topping, lopping, removing, injuring or willful destruction of any trees having a height greater than three (3) metres, except with the written consent of Council.

It is noted that, for the purposes of the Tree Preservation Order, a tree is defined as any plant having a height of three (3) metres or more, a girth (circumference) of 30cm or more measured at a distance of 40cm above the ground.

If you want to prune or remove any tree, an application for pruning or removal must be submitted to Council and approved prior to any work being carried out. Application forms are available at the Council Civic Centre, St Marys Queen Street Office and on the Web; an administration fee must be paid before the application can be processed.

Under the Tree Preservation Order it is an offence to prune, ringbark, cut down, remove or injure any tree without the consent of Council. It is illegal to carry out any work on a tree without consent and anyone found guilty can be fined \$1500 on the spot and up to \$1,100,000 under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979. If you have any questions about the Tree Preservation Order or you would like to obtain a permit, contact Council's Tree Management Officer on 4732 7777.

If pruning is approved, it is advised that you engage a fully insured and qualified Tree Surgeon or Arborist. All tree pruning must be done to Australian Standard, AS4373 2007, Pruning of Amenity Trees. Contact the National Arborists Association of Australia, the Tree Contractors Association or look in the Yellow Pages, local newspapers or on the Internet for appropriate people to carry out tree work.

Tree Care

A tree is a living thing that deserves respect, requires food, water, oxygen and care. Poor health of a tree is often caused by improper tree care or abuse. Remember that important parts of the tree (structural support roots and feeding roots) grow below the ground, extending from the trunk to well beyond the dripline (canopy spread) and care should be taken not to damage them.

- Never build or excavate within or close to the dripline, as this will damage roots, or starve remaining roots of oxygen, water and nutrients and result in declining health, limb drop, collapse or tree death
- Never seal the ground surface within or close to the dripline as this will compress surface feeding roots, deprive the soil of oxygen and restrict the roots of water, resulting in root death, limb drop or tree death.
- Never build uphill of the tree as this will restrict the roots water supply, resulting in root death. Dead wood is a result of old age, a change in growing conditions or abuse. Dead wood can fall if left unattended. The presence of sap (or kino on eucalyptus) is usually an indication of the tree's good health and its ability to defend itself against insect attack by drowning boring insects.
- Leaf insect attack is nature's way of pruning a tree. Usually the attack is short lived and the tree will recover. Regular soil improvement, water and moderate fertilising in late summer –early autumn will improve a tree's health.

Undesirable Trees

There are a number of trees which, for various reasons, are considered undesirable. Some of the more common undesirables include;

- Rubber Trees (*Ficus elastica*): extensive root system
- Black Locust (*Robina pseudoacacia*): prolific regeneration
- Rhus Tree (*Toxicodendron succedaneam*): poisonous/ noxious
- Privet spp: prolific regeneration
- Willow (*Salix spp*): extensive root system

The inclusion of any species on an undesirable tree or weed list does not exempt the tree from the Tree Preservation Order.

Listed Noxious weeds are exempt from the Tree Preservation order. See Hawkesbury River County Council website. <http://www.hrcc.nsw.gov.au/> for a current list of weeds.

Where to Plant Trees

- Most tree problems are caused by incorrect species selection or by poor location.
- Very careful consideration should be given to the expected mature height, width and shadowing effect that a tree will have.
- Availability of space, above and below ground, in the position where you attend to plant the tree should be compared with the spatial requirements of the tree. Particularly important are overhead power lines, underground pipes, buildings, drains, walls and solar access. It is recommended not to plant trees within two metres of the boundary.
- Select a suitable tree for a chosen location.

The Importance of Trees

- Trees provide a cool shade and provide UV protection,
- Trees create a microclimate for shrubs and other plants.
- Trees provide habitats for wildlife.
- Trees are an important link in the food chain
- Trees recycle air and reduce fine particle pollution (smog)
- Carbon sequestration
- Trees screen undesirable views.
- Trees are an effective wind break.
- Trees give an area unique landscape qualities which are reflected in higher real estate values.
- Reduce crime and improve mental health
- Reduce erosion
- Improve water quality
- Reduce salinity
- Noise abatement
- Reduction in glare

For information on tree problems see Fact Sheet 2. Trees and Neighbours /Damage from Trees.

For further information regarding any of the above or to pick up a Tree Pruning/Removal Application Form, contact the Tree Management Officer at Penrith City Council, 601 High Street Penrith, on 4732 7777.