



# Tree Permits Handout

Public Works – Parks Division  
(650) 259-2339 or  
treepermits@ci.millbrae.ca.us

Community Development – Planning Division  
(650) 259-2341 or  
planning@ci.millbrae.ca.us

## Applying for a Tree Permit

Residents or their tree contractor are required to apply for a Tree Permit with the City before performing work on any street tree or protected tree located on private property as per Millbrae Municipal Code Chapter 8.60.

A separate encroachment permit is required from Public Works when tree work is conducted from within the street.

All tree work conducted in the City of Millbrae must be done in accord with the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) A300 Tree Care Standards.

If the proposed tree work involves both tree pruning and tree replacement, a tree replacement permit should be applied for.

## Can a gardener perform tree work?

Tree work in California is required by State law to be conducted by a licensed tree and palm contractor (Cal Bus. & Prof. §7026.1). Under the law, gardeners are limited to performing only incidental trimming of trees measuring less than 15 feet in height after planting. While residents can perform routine tree maintenance and basic trimming themselves without a permit (defined as less than 25% of a tree's mass), the City needs to be notified of major tree work in advance by applying for a tree permit.

## Applying for a Tree Pruning Permit

Tree pruning permits are required before carrying out any tree trimming work on either public (street trees) or private property. There is no fee for a tree pruning permit. The application needs to identify the tree service contractor, location and dates of work being performed. Basic trimming and routine maintenance to maintain a protected tree in a healthy condition does not require a tree permit.

Tree Pruning Permit applications can be dropped off in the "Water Payment" box in the parking lot at City Hall, brought to our Engineering Department front counter, mailed to the Engineering Department at 621 Magnolia Ave. Millbrae, CA 94030, or emailed to us at treepermits@ci.millbrae.ca.us. Our hours are Monday through Friday 9:00am to 4:30pm.

## Applying for a Tree Removal Permit

A Tree Removal Permit is required for the removal or relocation of any street tree or protected tree on private property (Millbrae Municipal Code Section 8.60.080). Before the tree can be removed, the size and condition of the tree must be assessed. Residents have the option of providing either replacement trees or paying into an in-lieu tree replacement fund. If there is no feasible location available to plant a replacement tree, options for off-site planting are possible with prior approval.

Tree removal applications require documentation describing the health and reasons for the tree(s) removal, the replacement tree(s) being proposed, and a fee for processing. For larger, mature protected trees to be removed, an arborist's report will need to be provided with the application. Applications must be submitted in person to the Community Development Department at 621 Magnolia Ave. Millbrae, CA 94030.

After a permit is issued, tree removals require replacement trees to be planted and inspected for compliance as per Millbrae Municipal Code Section 8.60.110(E). Site photographs after installation can be provided in-lieu of an inspection. For more information about tree removal permits, visit our website at [www.ci.millbrae.ca.us/538/Tree-Permits](http://www.ci.millbrae.ca.us/538/Tree-Permits) or contact the Planning Division at (650) 259-2341.

## **What is the tree replacement formula when a protected tree is removed?**

- Removed significant trees with a diameter less than eighteen inches (18") must be replaced at a 2:1 ratio with a tree box diameter of twenty-four inches (24") and having a minimum caliper of one and a half inches (1.5").
- Removed significant trees with a diameter between eighteen inches (18") and twenty-four inches (24") must be replaced at a 3:1 ratio with a tree box diameter of twenty-four inches (24") and having a minimum caliper of one and a half inches (1.5").
- Removed significant trees with a diameter greater than twenty-four inches (24") must be replaced at a 4:1 ratio with replacement tree box diameter of twenty-four inches (24") and having a minimum caliper of one and a half inches (1.5") each or replaced at a 1:1 ratio using a replacement tree box diameter of forty-eight inches (48") and having a minimum caliper of three and a half inches (3.5").

## **What if I don't have enough space in my yard to plant a replacement tree?**

If there is inadequate space or an appropriate location to plant a replacement tree on a given property, replacement trees can be planted in off-site locations with prior approval of the City and the underlying property owner.

When installation of a replacement tree is not feasible, protected trees may be replaced with an in-lieu payment into the City's tree replacement fund. The value of the protected tree must be determined by a certified arborist using the most recent edition of the *"Guide for Plant Appraisal"* published by the International Society of Arboriculture. The amount of the in-lieu fee must be equal to the value of the protected tree. A reduced in-lieu fee may be assessed when paid in combination with a reduced number of replacement trees as required.

## **Emergency Tree Work**

Sometimes bad weather happens, and unexpected after-hours emergency tree work is necessary to protect your home. A protected tree may be removed or pruned in an emergency when it presents an imminent danger to life, property, utilities or essential transportation systems. In such an event, the property owner or their tree contractor must notify the authorities and obtain an Emergency Tree Permit from the City within 72 hours of the incident occurring (Millbrae Municipal Code Section 8.60.160).

## **What about enforcement of the Tree Ordinance?**

As per Municipal Code Chapter 8.60, all residents and property owners are responsible for maintaining street trees in front of their properties as well as certain protected trees on

their own properties. Major tree work must be performed by a state licensed tree contractor.

The City enforces the Tree Protection and Urban Forestry Ordinance to ensure that tree work is done safely, properly, and preserves the urban canopy. Anyone found responsible for removing or damaging a protected tree without a tree permit will be required to replace the tree and in addition to fines and penalties set forth in Millbrae Municipal Code Chapter 1.05.

## **Where can I find more information?**

For more information, contact the Planning Division staff at 650-259-2341 or email us at [treepermits@ci.millbrae.ca.us](mailto:treepermits@ci.millbrae.ca.us).

You can also download a tree application form and find more information online at: [www.ci.millbrae.ca.us/538/Tree-Permits](http://www.ci.millbrae.ca.us/538/Tree-Permits)

