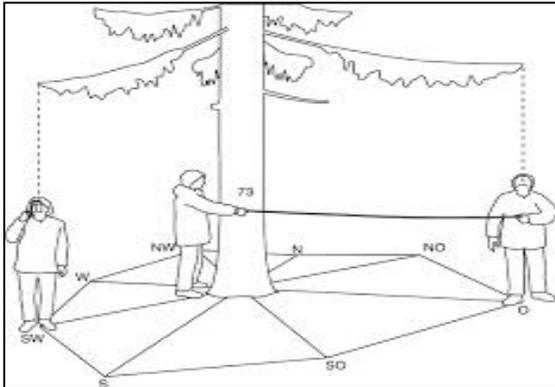




Tree Removal Frequently Asked Questions

Why does Woodcliff Lake care about trees?

Woodcliff Lake proudly possesses a 60% tree canopy, one of the largest in Bergen county. Our trees contribute to the allure and the bucolic nature of our community. The statistics show that communities with higher canopy coverage ratios have property values 15% to 20% greater than other communities. The council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers quantifies a mature tree at an appraised value upwards of \$10,000. They help decrease the costs of cooling during the summer months, block cold winds and keep homes warm during the winter months. They provide privacy, dampen noise, draw moisture from the ground, and help support a natural habitat for wildlife throughout the borough.



What is a tree canopy and how is it measured?

Tree canopy is the layer of leaves, branches, and stems of trees that cover the ground when viewed from above.

Residents can estimate the tree canopy of a tree using the simple formula for the Area of a Circle, $Area = \pi \times Radius^2$.

Stand at the edge of the furthest most branch, and measuring the distance to the tree trunk (see diagram). The canopy coverage in square ft = π (3.14) multiplied by the distance from the tree trunk squared

Why we are paying attention to tree removals?

Woodcliff Lake has had a tree removal management program for many years, known as the "Request for Tree Removal" procedure. The program contained a four (4) trees per year cap on tree removals, regardless of tree health, size and canopy impact. There were no requirements for replanting in the program and enforcement was difficult. There were many examples where residents, builders and tree contractors removed more trees than authorized or circumvented the process entirely. Complaints regularly flooded into borough hall. In some cases, entire lots were clear cut and the larger deciduous trees replaced by smaller trees and ornamental bushes, significantly altering the character of the neighborhood.

In 2014, the Shade Tree Committee put stricter control over the Request for Tree Removal procedures in order to track the number of trees that were being removed from the borough. In the period between 2014 and 2016, the Shade Tree Committee recorded more than 1200 tree removals. The analysis also found many unlicensed contractors were conducting business in the borough. Many were untrained and uninsured, posing a risk to the borough. Their presence was undercutting the reputable contractors and they advocating tree removals over tree preservation in order to maximize revenues.

These findings and statistics corroborated the years of complaints and created the justification for changes to our tree removal management program.

What are the Shade Tree preservation ordinances in our borough?

In 2016, the Shade Tree Committee presented the borough council with a sweeping array of changes to the ordinances relating to tree removals. The objectives were twofold; 1) Balance the rights and needs of the property owner against the "No Net Loss" Tree Canopy Preservation Objectives of the Borough; and 2) Encourage Tree Preservation behaviors through community engagement and contractor partnerships.



BOROUGH OF WOODCLIFF LAKE

188 PASCACK ROAD, WOODCLIFF LAKE, NEW JERSEY 07677

The new ordinances sought to;

- Increase the data collection and reporting on tree removal and tree planting activities in the borough.
- Clarify the definition of a tree to be a woody plant that is 6" or greater in diameter measured at breast height (6" DBH).
- Register tree removal contractors each year and ensure they understand the ordinances, have insurance and possess the necessary certifications to operate tree removal equipment.
- Establish a formal permitting process for tree removal activity, and placing the compliance obligations on the contractor and the homeowner.
- Hold tree contractors and residents accountable to the borough ordinances and the contingencies in the permits. Imposing fines for non-compliance.
- Establish replanting requirements for building activities and landscape renewal activities that would otherwise create a deleterious impact to the tree canopy

The new ordinances were passed by the Woodcliff Lake Council in October 2016 and enacted April 1, 2017.

Why does my tree contractor have to register with the borough?

Tree removal activity is dangerous work and presents a risk to property, you, your neighbors and the tree contractor's employees. Tree removal professionals must be licensed and trained to use equipment such as chain saws, ropes, cranes, and wood chippers to safely cut down and dispose of a tree. Even the most experienced contractors can accidentally drop a tree or tip a crane leading to injury, serious damage to surrounding homes, power outages and road closures. We therefore instituted a contractor registration program so we can verify that tree removal contractors clearly understand our ordinances and are properly licensed and insured. The ultimate goal is to establish a better partnership between our community and the tree removal contractors.

Why do I need a permit to remove trees?

Permits lead to inspections which help us measure the tree removal activity that is taking place in the borough. Permits also help us evaluate the effectiveness of our ordinances, raise level of awareness for tree preservation and help the Shade Tree Committee partner with residents as they undertake tree removal activity.

What trees am I allowed to remove?

A tree is as much a borough asset as it is an asset to a property owner. The shade tree committee's policy on tree removals is intended to balance the rights and needs of the property owner against the "No Net Loss" Tree Canopy Preservation Objectives of the Borough. Each request is evaluated on the merits of the request, the health of the tree and impact to the tree canopy.

The table below provides a guideline of the conditions that will generally be permitted.

- Diseased / Dying / Dead
- Pest Infested / Weed Infested
- Light Starved / Over Crowded
- UnRecoverable Damage
- Structural Decay
- Imminent Danger Present
- Invasive Species

The Woodcliff Lake Shade Tree Committee can help residents assess the health of their trees and the impact on the tree canopy. Residents may also submit reports from an ISA Certified Tree Experts as independent evidence that a particular tree needs to be removed. Requests that deviate from Woodcliff Lake Tree Canopy Preservation Objectives will be subject to replanting obligations or denied.



SPECIAL NOTE: There are certain trees in the borough that represent a rare species, add a unique character to the area, or of an historic age. Under no circumstances will residents be allowed to remove these trees.

[I have a big tree on my property and it scares me. Can I remove it?](#)

Generally no, unless the tree shows signs of decay, leaf wilting or presents other factors that require removal. The Woodcliff Lake Shade Tree Committee can help residents assess the health of trees and determine if there is a safety issue. Residents may also submit reports from an [ISA Certified](#) Tree Experts as independent evidence that a particular tree needs to be removed.

[I have a tree on my property that is dropping branches. Can I remove it?](#)

It depends. In general, the Woodcliff Lake Shade Tree Committee would encourage homeowners to trim trees rather than remove. The Woodcliff Lake Shade Tree Committee can help residents assess the health of trees and determine if there is a safety issue. Residents may also submit reports from an [ISA Certified](#) Tree Experts as independent evidence that a particular tree needs to be removed.

[What is a replanting obligation?](#)

When a request for tree removal is deemed to create a deleterious impact to the tree canopy, residents will be required to replant trees in order to revegetate their property to a level that meets the boroughs minimum tree canopy coverage requirement.

When such a request is made, applicants will be required to submit a Tree Replanting Binder which commits the applicant to replanting an appropriate number of [deciduous](#) trees, of a specific species and caliper, in an agreed upon location on the property. The Woodcliff Lake Shade Tree Committee maintains industry recognized metrics that project the canopy coverage that each tree species will establish 10 years after planting (i.e.: A 2.5" caliper white oak will generally create a 175 sqft canopy 10 years after it is planted).

Tree Removal Permits will be held until a Tree Replanting Binder is submitted by the applicant and approved by the Woodcliff Lake Shade Tree Committee. Fines will be imposed to homeowners and builders who do not meet their committed obligations.

[What trees should I plant, and where should I plant them?](#)

The Woodcliff Lake Shade Tree Committee maintains a list of recommended tree species for the borough. The standards ensure residents select species that are non invasive, are not susceptible to damage, disease or insects, and do not possess unappealing characteristics such as root growth, odor, flowering, etc. The appropriate species should be selected for the soil, water and light conditions in the planting area. Where appropriate, residents will be encouraged to plant tree species that are consistent with street names (i.e. Oak trees should be planted on Oak Drive).

Residents should also be mindful to select a species that is suitable for the location at time of planting and at maturity. Take precaution when planting in close proximity to structures, power lines, underground utilities etc. Plantings along the roadway right-of-way must be able to tolerate salt, meet a certain setback, be of a particular height and not impede vehicle line of sight.

The Woodcliff Lake Shade Tree Committee can provide tree species selection and planting assistance to residents.



Can I plant ornamental trees in exchange for removing trees?

Generally no. The objective is to meet the "No Net Loss" Tree Canopy Preservation objectives of the Borough. Replacing large growth trees with small growth trees is not consistent with this objective.

Do I need a permit to prune my trees

A permit is not required for the pruning of trees on private property. The Tree Protection Ordinance does set standards for the pruning of trees, and residents are encouraged to seek out trained professionals to prune trees so as not to damage the tree. Good practices include the following:

1. The tree cannot be climbed with spikes. Spikes can only be used if the tree is to be removed. The spikes leave wounds that give easy access for pests and decay organisms to infect the tree.
2. Cuts must be made just outside the branch collar. This is the area of swelling around the base of the limb. The branch collar contains the tissues that seal off the wound in a process called compartmentalization. This process is the natural way the tree 'heals' from the cut. Wound dressings are not needed and are detrimental to the tree.
3. Removal of the live canopy limbs cannot be more than 20 percent of the total live canopy of the tree. Dead limbs are not included in the twenty percent.
4. No topping of trees. No tipping of branches.

As a general practice, residents should always ask their tree removal contractor to provide proof of insurance and CTE / ISA Certification before any work begins.

I am renovating my home or building a new home. Can I remove trees?

Permits for tree removal will generally be granted for trees in the building footprint, but residents will not be allowed to remove trees from areas beyond the building footprint until revegetation plans (Landscaping Plans) have been reviewed and approved by the Shade Tree Committee.

Applications for tree removals must be submitted to the building department along with the architectural drawings. Applicants are required to submit landscaping plans that describe the deciduous trees that will be retained, removed and replanted on the property. Applicants are required to revegetate properties to meet street tree replanting requirements and tree canopy coverage requirements. Building approvals will be withheld until replanting obligations are met.

The Woodcliff Lake Shade Tree Committee has special tree replanting guidelines for building activities related to additions, new construction and major site renewal projects. Please contact the building department before tree removal work begins.