



City of San Mateo Parks and Recreation

Protected Tree Work Application for Removal and Pruning Permits

Tree Division, 330 W 20th Ave., San Mateo, CA 94403

Phone: 650- 522- 7420 | [treelpermits@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:treepermits@cityofsanmateo.org)

Tree Address _____

Work to be performed: Street Tree

Removal Canopy Pruning
 Planting in the public right of way Root Pruning

Pruning applications must be submitted with pruning specifications from the company who will be performing the work.

See Pruning Specification Guidelines.

Number of Trees: _____ Tree Species: _____

Diameter of Tree(s) measured 54" above ground: _____ OR Circumference of Tree(s) measured 54" above ground: _____

Reason for work (describe in detail):

Location of Tree (in relation to residence): Front Side

Is the tree behind a locked gate? Yes No Submitting an arborist report? Yes No

Does the applicant live at the tree address? Yes No

Is tree removal related to a current building permit? Yes No If yes, building permit number: _____

----- ***The section below must be completed by the property owner*** -----

I agree to the tree replacement requirements listed in S.M.M.C. 13.40 and the Administrative Guidelines.

-Street Tree Master Plan List: _____ Initial Here
-Estimated date of replanting: _____ Initial Here

I am aware that submitting photos with this application will expedite review of my permit. Initial Here

I give permission to the Managing Arborist to access the exterior areas of my property as required to visually inspect my tree(s). The arborist will knock on my door to announce their arrival and then proceed to inspect the tree(s). I need not be home for the inspections. Initial Here

Property Owner Name _____ Property Owner Address _____

Contact Email: _____ Contact Phone: _____

Applicant Signature

Date

FEES ARE NOT DUE AT THIS TIME – fees are due at the time of permit issuance. There is no permit fee for STREET TREE permits.

Fees include: a refundable tree replant deposit (\$503-\$824). The tree replacement deposit will be returned once the replacement tree(s) has been planted, inspected and confirmed by City staff. Replacement tree species must be chosen from the City's Street Tree Master Plan or San Mateo Park Designated Street Trees Map. The applicant has up to 12 months from the issued permit date to request a replant inspection. If the replant condition is not fulfilled within 12 months, the deposit will be forfeited and become an in-lieu fee and will be applied towards planting trees in public spaces elsewhere in the City. If multiple replants are required, but not replanted, the Department will bill the applicant the in-lieu fee for each unsatisfied replant, less the amount of the deposit.



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Protected Tree FAQ's

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Phone: 650- 522- 7420 | treerpermits@cityofsanmateo.org

What is the definition of a Protected Tree in San Mateo?

1. Heritage Trees

- a. Any Oak having a trunk diameter of 10 inches (circumference of 31.4 inches) or more measured at 4.5 feet (54 inches) above ground level.
- b. Any tree of any species with a trunk diameter of 15 inches (circumference of 47.1 inches) or more, measured at 4.5 feet (54 inches) above ground level.

2. Street Trees. Any tree of any size growing along or within the public right of way.

*Measuring the diameter of your tree is straightforward, requiring just a few simple steps with the help of common household items. You can find easy measurement instructions on our website at <http://www.cityofsanmateo.org/trees>.

Are permits required to remove or prune Protected Trees?

You must obtain a permit from the City's Managing Arborist if you wish to perform any of the following work:

- Removal of any Protected Tree (Heritage Tree or Street Tree).
- Pruning more than 25% of the total foliage of a Heritage Tree.
- Removal of any roots of a Heritage Tree that are within a distance equal to six times the trunk diameter of the tree.
- Any pruning of the foliage or roots of a Street Tree.

Exceptions are extended only to the Police, Fire Departments and PG&E should they declare a tree a hazard to life or property.

Unless you are certain about the amount of foliage or roots you plan to remove from a tree, it is recommended that you consult the City or an ISA Certified Arborist before performing any work. You do not want to find yourself paying a penalty or harming your tree due to misguided maintenance.

Where can I apply for a permit?

Street Tree Work Applications for permits can be obtained at City Hall located at 330 W 20th Ave., San Mateo; or online at <http://www.cityofsanmateo.org/trees>.

Protected/Heritage Tree Work Applications for permits can be obtained with Community Development Department at City Hall located at 330 W 20th Ave., or online at <https://www.cityofsanmateo.org/306/Community-Development>

Is there a fee for the permit?

A permit fee of \$110.00 is due at the time of permit issuance for work on any Protected/Heritage Tree. Additionally, a tree replacement deposit ranging from \$503 to \$824 (based on size of tree removed) is due at the time of permit issuance for removals. The permit fee partially covers the cost of processing the permit, including an inspection of the tree by the Managing Arborist. The replacement deposit is returned once a new tree has been planted in accordance with the conditions of the permit (valid for up to 12 months from the date of permit issuance). There is no fee for applications unless they are approved. Fees are required with all tree work except for Street Tree pruning.

What happens after I submit my Tree Work Application?

Upon receiving the application, the City's Managing Arborist will inspect the tree and evaluate your reasons for removal against the criteria listed in the Protected Trees Ordinance Section 13.40.100. If the Managing Arborist determines that your tree meets the findings required for removal, all abutting property owners are notified in writing of the decision and have 10 days to appeal said decision. If no appeals are filed within 10 days, the property owner is informed that the permit can be paid for and picked up at City Hall located at 330 W 20th Ave., San Mateo. The permit will then be emailed to you, along with a receipt.

How long does it take to get a permit approved?

In most cases it takes approximately four weeks. It may take longer if the application is related to a construction development project, or if there is insufficient information provided and more is needed.

What can I do to expedite the process of my permit?

The more supplementary information provided along with the application, the easier and quicker it will be to assess the situation and reach a determination. **Clear photos of the tree and any related damage or undesirable conditions are the easiest and most effective way to expedite application review.** A detailed report from an ISA Certified Arborist is not necessary, but may also be helpful.

Can I appeal the decision?

Any person may appeal the decision of the Managing Arborist. Requests shall be in writing and mailed or emailed to the Director of Parks & Recreation no later than 5:00 p.m. on the tenth calendar day after the decision.

Are tree protection measures required when building near a Protected Tree?

Depending on the scope and location of the project, the San Mateo Planning or Building Department may require that you submit a Tree Protection Plan prepared by an ISA Certified Arborist for any Protected Tree that may be impacted by construction activities. If the plan is sufficient to prevent harm to protected trees from reasonably foreseeable construction activities (as outlined in S.M.M.C. Section 13.40.070) it shall be approved and monitored through completion of the project.

Can the Managing Arborist come out and offer guidance about my tree before I apply for a permit?

No. The Managing Arborist can only inspect your tree after an application has been submitted.

Do I need a permit to remove a dead Protected Tree?

Yes. It is important that the Managing Arborist confirms the condition of your tree and issues a permit prior to removal. Please keep in mind that any helpful supplementary information (clear photos, reports, etc.) will expedite the processing of your application.

Will I be fined if a tree is removed without a permit?

Yes. It is unlawful to remove or cause damage to a Heritage Tree without a permit. Penalties can be assessed to all parties involved in an unauthorized removal or Major Pruning, including the homeowner and the contractor. For details regarding fines and penalties, please refer to section 13.40.140 of the San Mateo Municipal Code.

What happens once a removal permit has been issued?

A Tree Removal Permit is valid for up to 12 months from date of issue. Within this 12-month period, the owner may remove the tree(s) and plant a new replacement trees in accordance with the conditions of the permit. A “replacement deposit” between \$503 and \$805 is collected at the time of permit issuance. The amount of the deposit is determined based on the size and number of trees required to be replanted. Once the replacement tree(s) has been planted, please contact the Parks Department to request a replant inspection. After an inspection by City staff verifies the replant, your deposit will be refunded by mail. If the replacement tree(s) is not planted within 12 months of the permit date, the deposit is forfeited and used to plant new trees in city parks, medians, and public areas. If your permit required the replanting of multiple trees, the Department will bill you the in-lieu amounts less your deposit for any trees not planted.

Are there any specifications regarding the replacement tree?

Yes. Heritage Trees removed with a valid permit shall be replaced with a tree species from the Official Replant List according to the schedule below.

Heritage Tree Replacement Requirements

Trunk Diameter	Reforestation Requirement	Deposit Amount/ In-Lieu Fee*
Dead (any size)	(1) 15-gallon tree	\$515
10 to 30 inches	(1) 24-inch box tree OR (1) 15-gallon tree from "Preferred" Category	\$824
> 30 inches	(1) 24-inch box tree OR (2) 15-gallon trees from "Preferred" Category	\$824

15-gallon and 24-inch box trees are standard sizes available through tree growers. The replacement tree may be planted anywhere on the property, except in the public right of way. In some cases, the Managing Arborist will provide direction on the location of the replant as outlined in S.M.M.C. 13.40.110.

Street trees shall be replaced with one 24" box tree of a species assigned by the Managing Arborist in accordance with the Street Tree Master Plan or San Mateo Park Designated Street Trees Map.

My tree has become dangerous during a storm. Do I still need a permit for an emergency removal?

Generally speaking, exceptions to permits are extended only to the Police Department, Fire Departments and PG&E, should they declare a tree a hazard to life or property.

1. If your tree has caused a dangerous or life-threatening emergency: Call 911.
2. If your tree has become dangerous from a storm but is not causing an immediate threat: Call the Parks Department at (650) 522-7420. You will be issued an "emergency permit", at which point the Managing Arborist will visit your property and issue the permit on site.

My neighbor has a tree that is causing damage to my property. Can the City do anything about it?

The City cannot force the owner of the tree to remove or prune it. It is recommended that you work with your neighbor to arrive at a solution. If you are unable to arrive at a mutually agreeable solution, consider contacting the Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center for assistance at (650) 513-0330.

Why does the City have a Protected Trees Ordinance?

Protected Trees are living landmarks and an important component of the quality of life in San Mateo. It is our intent to explore methods of solving tree-related problems, without resorting to tree removal if possible. The ordinance also ensures that trees will be preserved during construction.

Trees provide many benefits to our community including:

- Raising property values
- Providing wind and sun protection, thereby lowering heating and cooling bills
- Providing privacy as well as natural habitats for song birds
- Reducing stress: in fact having trees close by has been proven to aid in recovery after surgery
- Providing over \$1.4 Million in net benefits to our City (City of San Mateo Urban Forest Resource Analysis, 2011)



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Tree Pruning Specification Guidelines

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For any tree in the City of San Mateo requiring a pruning permit, the City requires that the applicant submit a written set of pruning specifications.

The ISA Certified Arborist® who will oversee the work must prepare the pruning specifications.

Pruning specifications should include the following elements, in as much detail as possible:

1. Species and location of the tree(s) to be pruned
2. Objective
3. Pruning System (what the tree will look like after pruning)
4. Types of branches to be removed (i.e. living, dead, mistletoe, diseased, long or leveraged)
5. Pruning amount - percentage or number of branches to be removed
6. Location in the crown where the branches will be removed
7. Pruning cut types to be used - Branch removal, reduction, heading
8. Size range of parts to be removed

Some contractors will summarily and incorrectly state on a proposal that they will “prune to ANSI A300 standards.” Please note that ANSI A300 Standards are not specifications. The ANSI Standards provide the framework for the drafting of useful, measurable specifications.

For the best care of your tree, and to ensure a quick permit approval process, retain a contractor who:

- Is an ISA Certified Arborist (www.treesaregood.org/findanarborist)
- Understands and adheres to the ANSI A300 (Part 1) Standards revised in 2017
- Understands and adheres to ISA Best Management Practices



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Tree Deposit Refund Request Form

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Request Date: _____ Permit #: _____ Issue Date: _____

Permit Holder: _____

Permit Address: _____

I am requesting an on-site inspection for my refund.

(If the City Arborist cannot determine the size of the tree planted, we will require a receipt confirming the purchase size and species.)

I am submitting the following items to expedite my refund

- 1) Copy or photo of receipt showing the purchase of the tree(s)
- 2) Photo of the tree(s) in their container(s) before they are planted
- 3) Photo of the tree(s) planted in the ground.

Number of Trees Planted: _____ Species Planted: _____

Size of Container(s):

Location of trees planted:

24" box

Front

15 gallon

Rear

Other: _____

Side

Planter Strip (Street tree permit Required)

Other: _____

Protected Tree Work Permit holders have up to 12 months, (unless otherwise noted), from the date of the permit to satisfy the replanting conditions and request a refund of the paid deposit.

Tree deposit refunds are issued as a mailed paper check to the person or company who paid for the permit. **There are no exceptions.** Please allow approximately 2-4 weeks to receive the refund.

Name/Company requesting refund: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Mailing Address: _____