- Trees regulated by homeowners' association regulations.

Exceptions are typically provided for pruning or removing trees that are dead or injured and pose some threat to persons or property. You should also be careful not to remove trees on your neighbor's property, as you may be subject to civil and criminal penalties under North Carolina law.

Who is responsible for replanting trees in my community?

Cities and utilities may, or may not, replant trees that are removed from public property, utility easements, or public right-of-ways. State and federal requirements to remove trees that could damage or prevent maintenance access to power lines, gas lines, or sewer and water lines may also prohibit the replanting of those trees or other vegetation. Your local urban forester, city arborist, or public works department can tell you the landscaping options for your community.

On private property, owners are responsible for replanting trees and other vegetation that has been removed. Many communities have local ordinances and regulations that govern trees and other vegetation and offer guidance on tree species and planting location. For lists of trees and other vegetation that may be planted and guidelines for where to plant based on local regulations, contact your urban forester, city arborist, or public works department. Utility companies also may provide this information. Additionally, homeowner associations have regulations that govern tree planting within the development. This information should be provided to you upon buying your home.

Mark Dearmon

Plan before you plant. To avoid conflict with community infrastructure and utilities, consider the following before planting:
- The final height and spread at maturity of the tree you want to plant.
- Anything above and below the planting location that may create a conflict in the future.

Before planting, call the North Carolina One Call Center to ensure that it is safe to dig: 1.800.632.4949.

Where can I go for more information about maintaining trees in my community?

For more information on maintaining healthy trees in your community contact your:
- community's urban forester, city arborist, or public works department;
- local county Cooperative Extension office; or
- state forest service, Urban and Community Forestry Program.

Information is also available online from:

International Society of Arboriculture
www.isa-arbor.com/

National Arbor Day Foundation
www.arborday.org/

Trees Are Good
www.treesaregood.org/

TreeLink
www.treelink.org/

Urban Forestry Index
www.urbanforestryindex.com/

Urban Forestry South
www.urbanforestrysouth.org/

Who is responsible for the **trees**?

A citizens' guide to trees in the community

NC State University
A&T State University
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
Empowering People · Providing Solutions

Who is responsible for the trees?

A citizens' guide to trees in the community

A Mutual Benefit

Urban trees improve our lives by benefiting our economy, our environment, and our health.

- Trees improve the appearance of neighborhoods and property, resulting in higher home values.
- Trees lower the demand for energy and reduce cooling and heating bills by providing shade and serving as windbreaks for homes.
- Trees control erosion and reduce urban runoff, resulting in lower stormwater management costs.
- Trees clean the air and water by capturing pollutants that lower air and water quality.
- Trees foster healthy communities by creating safe, shaded, open spaces that encourage children to play and adults to congregate, conduct business, exercise, and interact.

A Shared Responsibility

Trees are the responsibility of the entire community — including you the citizen and your local government — on both public and private property.

Public property includes parks, greenways, and other areas owned and controlled by your local government. Local government ordinances designate who is responsible for overseeing the maintenance and care of community trees. Many communities assign this

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responsibility to the city arborist, urban forester, or to staff within the public works or similar departments. These professionals will work with their staff or through contractors to maintain vegetation on public property.

On private property, owners are responsible for the maintenance and care of trees, shrubs, and other vegetation. The exception is cutting and pruning trees and shrubs located in right-of-ways or other types of easements — areas of your property designated for such things as utilities and sidewalks that are often directly adjacent to the street. Easements give utilities and local governments the right to maintain vegetation, including pruning and removal of trees and shrubs. Property owners may be prohibited from planting certain vegetation within these easements.

> **In North Carolina,** the Overhead High-Voltage Line Safety Act requires anyone working or lifting within 10 feet of overhead power lines or poles to contact the appropriate electric utility through the North Carolina One Call Center: 1.800.632.4949

Why are trees pruned or removed in my community?

As trees grow and develop they require maintenance, such as pruning, to enhance the benefits they provide our community and to reduce conflicts with community infrastructure. Routine pruning is necessary to prolong the life of the tree and minimize hazards such as falling limbs.

Community-owned trees (or public trees) are often pruned or removed for safety and health reasons. Utilities prune trees for a different purpose — to ensure that trees do not interfere with service lines. This helps prevent service interruptions from downed trees and branches.

Local governments are responsible for ensuring that trees in public areas and along public right-of-ways do not pose a safety risk to the public. On private property, owners are responsible for ensuring safety.

Trees can pose a safety risk if:

- they have structural defects or damage that may lead to falling and harm people or property,
- they limit line of sight on streets or driveways, or
- they grow into utility lines, interrupting power, cable, or phone service.

Becky Kirkland

Pruning or removal of trees that pose a health risk to the urban forest can minimize disease or insect infestations, minimize storm damage, and limit the spread of invasive plants, diseases, and insects. Local governments and private citizens must work together to ensure the overall health of the urban forest.

Trees are also pruned to maintain aesthetic appearances. Aesthetic pruning focuses on enhancing the natural form and character of the tree. Pruning also stimulates flower production in trees when it is timed appropriately within the growing season. Private property owners typically prune for aesthetic reasons, but most local governments do little or no aesthetic pruning because of costs.

> **Certified arborists** are professionals who are trained in tree maintenance and care. Contact a certified arborist to periodically assess the health and address the maintenance and care of your trees. To find a certified arborist in your area, contact your local Cooperative Extension agent or search the International Society of Arboriculture Web site at http://www.isa-arbor.com/findArborist/findarborist.aspx

Are there restrictions to pruning or removing trees on my property?

Check with your urban forester, city arborist, or other community officials before proceeding with pruning or tree removal. Permission may be required for any of the following situations:

- Trees, including historic, champion, or specimen trees, that are regulated through local ordinances.
- Trees within riparian buffers or along streams, rivers, or other bodies of water.
- Trees protected by easements or covenants on private property.