



County of Ventura Tree Protection Ordinance Frequently Asked Questions

County of Ventura • Resource Management Agency • Planning Division
800 S. Victoria Ave., Ventura, CA 93009 • (805)654-2488 • www.vcrma.org/tree-permits-and-the-tree-protection-ordinance

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The information in this document applies to unincorporated areas (outside of city limits) in the County of Ventura. See the Glossary at the end of this document for definition of terms.

Regulations

1. What types of trees are protected by the County’s Tree Protection Ordinance?

Outside the coastal zone, protected trees include all oaks and sycamores on private property that measure 9.5 inches in girth (circumference) or larger (generally measured 4.5 feet above ground), trees of any species that have “heritage” status because they measure 90 inches in girth or larger, trees of any species with a historical designation, and most native trees in the County’s Scenic Resources Protection Zone that measure 9.5 inches in circumference (See Glossary). Most trees in the coastal zone are protected. Trees protected are summarized in the table below.

Species/Type	Girth (min.)	Zones
Non-Coastal Zone		
Oak	9.50" single-trunk 6.25" multiple-trunk	All
Sycamore	9.5"	All
Heritage (any species)	90" single-trunk 72" multiple-trunk	All
Historical* (any species)	Any	All
Alder, Ash, Bay, Cottonwood, Elderberry, Big Cone Douglas Fir, White Fir, Juniper, Maple, Pine, Walnut	9.5"	SRP**
Coastal Zone		
ESHA*** Natives: Arroyo Willow, Big Cone Douglas Fir, Big Leaf Maple, Black Cottonwood, Fremont Cottonwood, California Ash, California Bay Laurel, California Juniper, Western Juniper, Catalina Ironwood, Santa Cruz Island Ironwood, Elderberry, Pacific madrone, Oak, Southern California Black Walnut, Sycamore, White Alder	Any 3" single-trunk 6" multiple-trunk	All
Heritage	28" single-trunk 22" multiple-trunk	All
Historical*	Any	All

*Historical Tree - Identified as of historical or cultural significance.

** See the [Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance \(https://vcrma.org/docs/images/pdf/planning/ordinances/VCNCZO_Current.pdf\)](https://vcrma.org/docs/images/pdf/planning/ordinances/VCNCZO_Current.pdf) for the SRP Zone locations (generally around lakes and ridgelines).

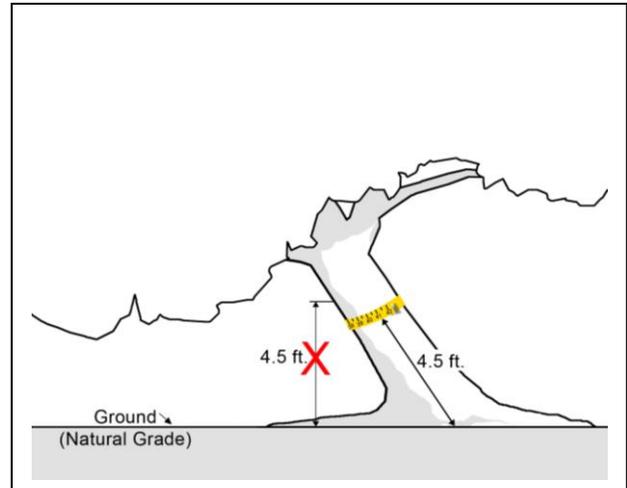
*** ESHA Tree – see the Tree Protection Regulations in the CZO (Sec. 8178-7.3.1) for definition of an ESHA tree.

2. How do I find out where the Scenic Resource Protection Overlay Zone areas are?

The Scenic Resource Protection Overlay Zone areas in the County are primarily found around lakes and other water bodies. Maps of these areas can be found at <http://www.vcrma.org/tree-permits-and-the-tree-protection-ordinance>

3. How do I measure a tree’s girth?

Girth is the circumference of the trunk, generally measured at 4.5’ above the ground. If the trunk is at an angle, the distance above the ground is measured along the trunk’s centerline.



4. When do I need an authorization letter?

In the non-coastal zone, the following actions involving protected trees require issuance of an authorization letter:

- To remove or alter a tree in an emergency situation.
- For minor pruning.
- To remove a dead tree.
- To remove less than 6 trees in 12 months for agriculture; no heritage or historical trees.

5. When do I need a ministerial tree permit?

The following actions involving protected trees require issuance of a ministerial tree permit:

Non-Coastal Zone
To remove a hazardous tree.
To remove, alter or encroach into the tree protection zone (TPZ) of a tree that interferes with public utilities, public safety (i.e., at parks, traffic visibility, per Fire Dept.), or emergency vehicles. Includes brush clearance tree <i>removal</i> .
To remove an Introduced Protected Tree on private property.
To remove, alter or encroach into the TPZ of a tree that interferes with existing private sewer line.
To remove, alter or encroach into the TPC of a tree whose roots or limbs interfere with existing structures.
To remove, alter or encroach into the TPZ of a tree to allow for reasonable use of property. Applies to pruning for utilities on private property. No more than 5 trees (cumulatively) may be altered or encroached upon; only 3 may be oaks or sycamore; no historical or heritage trees.
To remove 6 to 25 trees in 12 months for agriculture; no historical trees.
Coastal Zone
To remove, alter or encroach into the TPZ of a non-native or non-native invasive tree outside the bird breeding and nesting season (Jan 1 through Sep 15).
To remove, alter or encroach into the TPZ of a protected tree below or adjacent to public overhead lines located in State Responsibility Areas.
To encroach less than 10 percent into the TPZ of a protected tree.
To prune a protected tree’s live limbs, provided such trimming does not endanger the life of the tree or result in an imbalance in structure, or remove more than 20 percent of its tree canopy.

6. When do I need a discretionary tree permit?

The following actions involving protected trees require issuance of a discretionary tree permit:

Non-Coastal Zone
To remove, alter or encroach into the TPZ of a heritage or historical tree

To remove, alter or encroach into the TPZ of six or more tree or four or more oaks or sycamores (cumulatively) to allow for reasonable use of property
To remove, alter or encroach into the TPZ of trees to further agriculture (beyond the ministerial permit limits) or timber production (if not regulated by the California Forest Practices Act)
If a protected tree has been altered without a permit and applicant seeks to remove tree from lot
Coastal Zone
Post-removal, -alteration, or -transplantation
To alter the tree in a way that may compromise health of tree to the point that requires tree removal
Encroachment into the TPZ
Pruning of tree canopy greater than 20 percent
Following the issuance of an Emergency Permit

7. How do I get a permit to remove a protected tree?

The steps for getting a tree permit vary depending upon the type of permit needed and your specific circumstances. Table 2 in the document *Submittal Requirements for Tree Permits & Authorizations* contains an explanation of all of the documentation that will be required for a tree permit. For ministerial tree permits (the most common type), the typical steps are:

- 1) Discuss your situation with the County's tree permit planner (AJ Bernhardt: 805/654- 3436) to make sure you understand which procedures you need to follow.
- 2) If an arborist verification will be required, hire an arborist to complete the required arborist verification form.
- 3) Submit the following to the Planning Division: a completed tree permit application with site sketch or plan and photos; the tree permit application fee; an arborist verification (if required).
- 4) Receive approval. Submission of an application does not guarantee that a permit will be issued. If an *Arborist Verification of Tree Protection Measures* is required, the Planning Division may issue preliminary approval until required protection measures (such as temporary fencing) are in place and verified by an arborist.

The documents mentioned above can be found on the County's website at: <https://vcrma.org/tree-permits-and-the-tree-protection-ordinance>.

8. How much does a tree permit cost?

The fee for a ministerial tree permit from the County is \$167 for one tree and \$340 for more than one tree. For most ministerial permits you will also need to hire an arborist to prepare a County-required arborist verification for submittal with your application.

For discretionary tree permits the County takes a deposit of \$750 and bills for staff time against that deposit; the final cost may be more or less than this. If a discretionary tree permit is part of a larger discretionary permit, one deposit is taken for both.

There is no fee for an authorization letter.

9. Can I prune a protected tree on my property without a permit?

Whether or not a permit is required for pruning a protected tree depends on how much pruning you want to do. In the non-coastal zone, no permit is needed for minor pruning (see Glossary). A ministerial tree permit is required for major pruning and will only be issued if an arborist determines the pruning is needed to support the health of the tree. In no case is major pruning allowed to improve views. In the coastal zone minor pruning is only allowed without a permit for fuel modification zone maintenance. Removing more than 20 percent of the canopy of a protected tree requires a zoning clearance (ministerial permit) with inspection in the coastal zone.

10. What will happen if I remove a protected tree without first getting a permit?

Removing a protected tree without first getting the required permit, is a violation of County ordinance. You will be required to apply for the permit after-the-fact and application fees will be doubled. In addition, you will pay for staff costs and for an arborist's time to investigate the situation and determine whether the tree removal was something that could have been approved by the County. If the removal would(?) not have been approved or if the removal should have been permitted as a discretionary tree permit, you will be required to offset the loss of the tree through payment of fees or replanting trees and monitoring them for five years. In the coastal zone, all after-the-fact tree permits require a planned development permit (discretionary permit).

11. My tree is starting to interfere with the power lines. What should I do?

There are safety regulations which govern tree pruning near power lines. First call the utility to report the situation. If the utility determines that the pruning can be safely performed by others, you may pursue a tree permit for the pruning. Protected trees that interfere with public utilities may be removed or altered with a ministerial tree permit.

12. Is the utility company allowed to prune the trees in front of my house?

Utility companies are mandated by state safety requirements to prune trees in order to maintain clearance between their wires and tree foliage. Utility companies own easements over land where utility lines run in order to allow the access needed for this maintenance. Similarly, CalTrans and the County Public Works Agency may also trim or remove trees in public easements or rights-of-way in order to maintain safe conditions. If you have a complaint about how tree trimming or removing was executed, contact the utility or agency involved directly.

13. How do I know if a protected tree is posing a hazard and should be removed?

The level of risk and degree of failure potential for any tree is affected by many variables (e.g., species, size, location, history, weather patterns, soil type, wounding, decay, etc.). You should have a professional arborist inspect the tree if you are worried about it. If you plan to remove a hazardous protected tree, have the arborist complete an *Arborist Verification of Hazardous or Conflicting Tree* form, which will be required with your permit application. (See Glossary)

14. What if I have a protected tree in the fire safety brush clearance zone?

The 100-foot brush clearance requirements of the Ventura County Fire Protection District specify the following with regard to all trees:

- 1) Trees must be trimmed up off the ground 2 feet or 1/3 the height of the tree which ever is less.
- 2) Dead branches must be removed and cleared.
- 3) There must be 10 feet of vertical clearance between roofs and tree vegetation.
- 4) There must be 10 feet of horizontal clearance between chimneys and tree vegetation.
- 5) There must be 13.5 feet of vertical clearance along any fire apparatus access road.
- 6) Additional requirements and limitations may be imposed by the Fire Protection District based upon site inspection and risk analysis of the property and area.

These requirements are included in the District's *Fire Hazard Reduction Program* , which can be found at <http://vcfd.org/fire-prevention/fire-hazard-reduction-program-fhrp>.

Pruning a protected tree for required fire brush clearance purposes does not require a tree permit. Removing a protected tree for fire brush clearance requires a ministerial tree permit.

15. What if my insurance company insists that I remove a protected tree?

Sometimes requests from insurance companies conflict with County policy. Try providing the insurance company with documentation that explains the County's regulations. If they do not change their requirements, it may be necessary to use a different insurance company.

16. Do the tree protection regulations apply to agricultural operations?

The tree protection regulations apply to agricultural operations but the limits and restrictions are much different. In the non-coastal zone, legitimate agricultural operations may remove up to 5 trees per year with an authorization letter, up to 25 trees a year with a ministerial permit, and beyond these limits a discretionary permit is required. In the coastal zone, legitimate agricultural operations may replace lemon and avocado trees without a permit (see the Tree Protection Ordinance in the CZO for more detail). Proof that the agricultural operation is legitimate is required in the form of an approved farm plan.

17. Is a tree permit required for transplanting a protected tree to a different location?

Transplanting a protected tree requires a tree permit. In the non-coastal zone, if the purpose of relocating the tree is allow for reasonable access to or use of your property, you may transplant up to 5 trees, but only 3 oaks or sycamores (but not historical or heritage trees) with a ministerial permit. For purposes of a ministerial tree permit, transplanting a tree to a different location is treated the same as removing or felling a tree. This is because ongoing monitoring to ensure that the tree lives cannot be imposed on ministerial permits. To transplant more than this number, a discretionary permit is required. For discretionary tree permits, if a transplanted tree is still doing well after 5 years then replacing or offsetting the transplanted tree is not required. In the coastal zone, transplanting a protected tree requires a planned development permit (discretionary permit).

18. May I remove a protected tree when it prevents me from developing or using my property?

In the non-coastal zone, if certain findings can be made, up to 5 protected trees (but no more than 3 oaks or sycamores), may be removed with a ministerial permit to allow for reasonable use of or access to property. These findings are:

- The existing site does not offer sufficient space for an alternative location for the development, improvement, access or use that is unconstrained by protected trees, geography, geology, topography, sun access, shade, development standards, or sensitive biological resources.
- The purpose of the request is not to create, maintain, or improve views or avoid minor and expected tree nuisances such as dropping leaves or debris.
- The tree cannot be saved through trimming, tree surgery, or other reasonable treatment, as documented in an approved Arborist Verification of Tree Status.
- The number of trees requested for removal does not exceed the cumulative ministerial threshold for the parcel.
- The tree is not of heritage size or historical status.
- There are no known outstanding zoning violations on the parcel(s) and any applicable zoning violation fees have been paid.
- The tree to be removed is not known by the applicant to contain an active nest of a bird covered by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

A discretionary permit is required to remove more than 5 protected trees (or more than 3 oaks or sycamores) to allow for reasonable use of or access to property. Discretion is used in these instances to determine the appropriateness of the tree removal.

19. I am planning to buy a property that has protected trees on it. What do I need to know?

If you want to remove a protected tree to develop a property, or if development or related activities could impact the tree protection zone, then it is important that you understand what is and is not allowed. In the non-coastal zone, the number of protected trees that may be removed from a parcel to allow reasonable use of or access to a property is limited. Up to 5 trees, but no more than 3 oaks or sycamores, may be removed from a parcel for this purpose. (See Question # 18 above.) This number is cumulative and runs with the property, not the property owner. Thus if a previous owner already removed 3 oak trees to allow for reasonable use of the property, no more oaks or sycamores may be removed.

In the coastal zone, the removal of a protected is generally not allowed except for a few specific cases. New principal use or structure shall be sited and designed to avoid damage to protected trees to the maximum extent feasible. See the Tree Protection Ordinance in the CZO for more information (Sec. 8178-7.4.2).

It is also important to understand that the tree protection zone (TPZ) must be protected. Activities in the TPZ that could potentially damage the tree—such as building, trenching, paving, driving—must be approved in advance and may be restricted.

20. Will I need to replace a protected tree that is removed?

In the non-coastal zone, replacement of removed trees, or providing other equivalent offsets, is only required of discretionary tree permits. See Question #4 above for the list of actions that require a discretionary tree permit. The requirements of replacement for altered or removed protected trees are much more extensive in the coastal zone. See Sec. 8178-7.6.1 of the CZO for detailed mitigation requirements.

21. Where can I learn more about the new Tree Protection Ordinance?

The Tree Protection Ordinance and related documents may be obtained on the County's website at www.vcrma.org/tree-permits-and-the-tree-protection-ordinance. You can also call AJ Bernhardt the Planning Division's Tree Permit Coordinator, at 805/654-3436.

Neighbor Issues

Disputes between neighbors are a civil matter between property owners and the County will not intervene. However, if a protected tree is involved, the County's regulations to maintain and protect the tree still apply.

22. May I prune the part of my neighbor's protected tree that overhangs my yard?

Two main points to remember when dealing with trees on adjacent private property are that:

- 1) You cannot trespass onto your neighbor's property; and
- 2) You have the right to maintain your property in a safe condition.

For major pruning (see Glossary), a tree permit must be obtained from the Planning Division. You may apply for a permit to prune the part of a tree that overhangs your property. For minor pruning, a permit is not required.

Of course it would be best to discuss the need for pruning with your neighbor in advance, and to try to come to agreement on a tree care plan acceptable to both parties. As stated above, neighbor disputes are civil legal issues outside of the County's purview.

Pruning must always be done in accordance with the requirements of the Tree Protection Ordinance, which includes adherence to the International Standards of Arboriculture (ISA) Pruning Standards.

23. May my neighbor prune the part of their protected tree that overhangs my yard?

Same answer as above.

24. Who pays if I have a professional come and prune my neighbor's tree?

A tree owner is not obligated to maintain (or pay for pruning of) a tree that is overhanging another's property. Maintenance responsibility of a tree is entirely left to whatever the neighbors can work out. However, most residents share costs of a mutually owned tree.

25. Who owns the tree growing on the property line shared with our neighbor?

You are both the owners of the tree. Whether it started as a young tree on your or your neighbor's property, it now belongs to both as property in common. Hopefully friendly communication can resolve decisions for a mutually-owned tree.

Street Trees

26. Who is responsible for caring for trees in the road right-of-way?

Although the road right-of-way is owned by the County (in unincorporated areas), the maintenance of trees in the road right-of-way is the responsibility of the adjacent property owner. Trees in the road right-of-way are not covered by the County's Tree Protection Ordinance. However an encroachment permit must be obtained from the County Public Works Agency, Transportation Division for any tree removal or any major maintenance activities involving trees in the road right-of-way. For County road right-of-way tree issues contact the Public Works Agency, Transportation Division at 805/654-2055.

Trees in the road right-of-way on state highways are the responsibility of Caltrans. For Caltrans right-of-way issues contact Caltrans at 213/897-6381. (For more information about the road right-of-way, see the Glossary.)

27. A street tree is lifting my sidewalk and driveway. Can I get this tree removed?

The maintenance of trees in the road right-of-way is the responsibility of the adjacent property owner. The answer given above (#26) applies, except that when a tree needs to be removed because the roots are causing damage to the sidewalk, curb or gutter, no fee is charged for the encroachment permit.

28. Can I plant a tree in the road right-of-way?

Yes, an adjacent property owner may plant a tree in the road right-of-way, but an encroachment permit from the Public Works Agency, Transportation Division (805/654-2055) is required. In addition, the type of tree must be a variety on the Division's approved street tree list. Other varieties, if recommended by a state-licensed landscape architect, may be considered. The approved tree list can be found on pages 37 and 38 of the Landscape Design Criteria: <https://docs.vcrma.org/images/pdf/planning/ordinances/Landscape-Design-Criteria.pdf>.

29. I am concerned that a leaning tree in my yard may fall over. What should I do?

Leaning trees are not necessarily a problem. In nature trees often end up in leaning situations and the strength of the roots keeps the tree firmly in place. So a tree growing naturally at an angle may

have a very low risk of failure, as long as there are no other significant problems with the tree, such as defects, injuries, decay, disease, etc. If, however, the tree had been growing upright and has shifted to a leaning position over time or after a storm or significant changes to the tree's environment—such as increases in irrigation or disturbance to the root zone— it may be at risk for falling. Consult with an arborist to discuss the appropriate action.

30. Why is the tree protection zone so important?

The tree protection zone is intended to protect the tree roots and their soil environment. Trees not only exchange oxygen through their leaves, but also through their roots. If the soil under a tree gets compacted, such as when heavy equipment drives over the soil, air pockets in the ground are eliminated and this reduces the amount of air available to the tree. Piling dirt or other materials on top of the soil surface has a similar affect. Compacted soil also prevents water from moving in the soil. Without adequate air and water, the many beneficial soil microorganisms cannot thrive and do their job of releasing nutrients and making them available to the tree. Thus roots in compacted soil are deprived of what they need and are unable to supply air, water and nutrients to the rest of the tree, resulting in the tree becoming stressed and declining in health. Thus protecting the soil environment of tree roots is essential to protecting the health of entire tree.

31. Would someone from the County come out and take a look at my sick tree?

County staff is not available to investigate the status of trees on private property. We suggest you contact the International Society of Arboriculture website (see Links) for professional arborist referrals and general information.

32. What is the best time of year to plant a tree?

Late fall is the best time for planting native trees. Days are getting shorter, temperatures are cooling, and rains will soon come to give the trees time to send down deep roots and get established before the dryness of summer arrives.

33. How is planting a tree most properly performed?

Tree planting guidelines are available at https://www.treesaregood.org/Portals/0/TreesAreGood_New%20Tree%20Planting_0621.pdf.

34. May gardener has blown away all the leaves from the ground under my tree: Is this bad?

The leaf litter of trees and shrubs is an important component of a healthy landscape. Where leaves must be removed for aesthetic reasons, a protective organic mulch, 3 to 4 inches deep, should be maintained to protect the soil. Keep mulch at least 1 foot away from tree trunks.

35. What is the best way to mulch a tree?

Detailed tree mulching guidelines are available at <http://www.treesaregood.org/portals/0/docs/treecare/ProperMulching.pdf>.

36. Can the County recommend a tree service company to work on my trees?

The County of Ventura cannot recommend specific tree service companies. However the County maintains a list of tree trimmers that have registered with the Planning Division to certify that they have read and understand Ventura County's Tree Protection Regulations and Tree Protection Guidelines as well as the International Standards of Arboriculture (ISA) Pruning Standards. This list can be found at www.vcrma.org/tree-permits-and-the-tree-protection-ordinance.

37. My tree has a bunch of mushrooms growing on and around it. Should I be concerned?

Maybe. The presence of mushrooms, or fruiting bodies of fungus, may indicate wood decay associated with your tree. This is of special concern if you see the fungus around the base of the tree or along the roots extending into the soil. Certain fungi feed on the wood of the tree and weaken the structural integrity of the tree. Such trees have the potential to fail without warning and the potential risk they may present should be taken very seriously. Not all fungi that harm trees can be seen. Call an arborist to examine the situation and discuss the appropriate action.

38. Where can I go to learn more about tree care?

The International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) is the world's leading organization devoted to tree care. They publish a 17-title [Tree Care Consumer Information Series](#) at www.treesaregood.com/ that covers a wide variety of topics relevant to tree care.

39. My oak tree has foamy or drippy wounds on the trunk. What should I do?

This foaming or dripping may indicate a disease or pest infestation. In most cases this will resolve itself in time, and minor lesions are typically tolerated by healthy oak trees. However, in some cases these lesions can indicate other problems with your tree or with the landscape, and you may want to call an arborist to help you determine if you should make an effort to minimize the problem that led to these injuries to your trees.

40. I've heard that watering is bad for oak trees. When is irrigation good for oak trees?

Summer irrigation is typically discouraged for native oak trees, except for young or newly planted trees, during extended drought, or to give support to trees recently stressed, such as from construction damage. Irrigation of oak trees should be limited in nature, rather than regular. For this reason, oak trees and lawns are usually incompatible.

41. Where can I go to learn more about tree care?

The International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) is one of the leading organizations devoted to tree care. They publish a [Tree Care Consumer Information Series](#) at www.treesaregood.com/ that covers a wide variety of topics relevant to tree care. The Ventura County Master Gardener helpline can also take your calls Tuesday and Thursdays between 1:00 and 4:00 pm at: 805/645-1455.

Links

Ventura County Tree Protection Ordinance information and documents.

www.vcrma.org/tree-permits-and-the-tree-protection-ordinance

Ventura County Public Works Agency, *Sidewalk and Street Tree Maintenance* brochure.

http://pwportal.ventura.org/td/Residents/Streets_and_Transportation/FAQs_and_Citizen_Brochures/Brochure_SidewalkandStreetTreeMaintenance.pdf

Ventura County Fire Protection District, *Fire Hazard Reduction Program*.

<http://vcfd.org/fire-prevention/fire-hazard-reduction-program-fhrp>.

International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). Provides an up-to-date list of certified arborists.

<https://www.isa-arbor.com/>

International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). *Tree Care Information* series.

www.treesaregood.com/

American Society of Consulting Arborists (ASCA).
www.asca-consultants.org/

Southern California Edison
Tree trimming service request.
<https://www.sce.com/safety/power-lines>

SelecTree at CalPoly. Tool for selecting the right tree for the right location.
<https://selecttree.calpoly.edu/search/>

Phone Numbers

Ventura County Planning Division

AJ Bernhardt, Tree Permit Coordinator
805/654-3436

Ventura County Public Works Agency, Transportation Division

For County road right-of-way tree issues.
805/654-2055

Southern California Edison

Tree trimming service request.
800/655-4555

Caltrans

For state highway right-of-way issues.
213/897-6381

Glossary

Arborist

An arborist is a tree care industry professional who is versed in the care of trees. Some arborists are consulting arborists and some arborists specialize in trimming and removing trees. Many arborists may do both, but typically if you need a diagnosis for what is wrong with your trees, you should hire a consulting arborist. If you have a tree that has been storm damaged or is dead, you should hire an arborist that specializes in tree trimming or removal. For County tree permits, the Planning Division requires that arborist verifications and reports be prepared by an arborist certified by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) or a related professional, such as a landscape architect, with qualifying education, knowledge and experience, as determined by the Planning Director.

Arborist Verification

An arborist verification is required for tree altering activity subject to a ministerial tree permit or an authorization letter. Verifications provide simple confirmation from a tree professional, on a form provided by the Planning Division, of basic tree information or site conditions. There are five categories of arborist verification:

1. Dead tree (Tree Form M1)
2. Major pruning for tree health (Tree Form M2)
3. Hazardous or conflicting tree (Tree Form M3)
4. Tree status (Tree Form M4)
5. Installation of tree protection measures (Tree Form M5)

Canopy

The upper part of a tree or group of trees, including branches and leaves.

Circumference or Girth

A measurement of the distance around the trunk of a tree, generally measured at 4.5' above the ground. Circumference = diameter x 3.1416. Diameter = circumference / 3.1416.

Discretionary Tree Permit

Discretionary permits are those that require the exercise of judgment, deliberation, or decision on the part of the decision-making authority in the process of approving or disapproving a particular activity. Discretionary tree permits are required to remove, alter or encroach into the TPZ of:

- A heritage or historical tree.
- 6 or more trees or 4 or more oaks or sycamores (cumulatively) to allow for reasonable use of property.
- Trees to further agriculture (beyond the ministerial tree permit limits) or timber production (if not regulated by the Calif. Forest Practices Act).

Dripline

The area created by extending a vertical line from the outermost portion of the limb canopy to the ground.

Felling

To cut, push, or pull down, or otherwise topple a tree.

Heritage Tree

Any species of tree with a single trunk of 90 or more inches in girth or with multiple trunks, two of which collectively measure 72 inches in girth or more. In addition, species with naturally thin trunks when full grown (such as Washington Palms), species with naturally large trunks at an early age (such as some date palms), or trees with unnaturally enlarged trunks due to injury or disease (e.g., burls and galls) must be at least sixty feet tall or 75 years old to be considered as a heritage tree.

Historical Tree

Any tree or group of trees identified by the County or a city as a landmark, or identified on the Federal or California Historic Resources Inventory to be of historical or cultural significance, or identified as contributing to a site or structure of historical or cultural significance. Only three trees or groups of trees meet this definition at this time. The list of these trees can be found at https://docs.vcrma.org/images/pdf/planning/tree-permits/Historical_Trees_in_VTA_County.pdf

Introduced Protected Tree

A protected tree that has been planted by a person for purposes of affecting the environment, architecture, climate or aesthetics of a given place and are, therefore, considered landscape features.

Major Pruning

Pruning where the circumference of one or more limbs to be pruned is greater than 20 percent of the tree trunk's circumference or where more than 20 percent of the tree's canopy or root system will be removed.

Minor Pruning

Pruning where the circumference of each limb to be pruned is less than 20 percent of the tree trunk's circumference; and where such pruning does not endanger the life of the tree, result in an imbalance in structure, or remove more than 20 percent of the tree's canopy or root system.

Ministerial Tree Permit

Ministerial permits are those where the decision-making authority merely has to determine whether there has been conformity with applicable statutes, ordinances, or regulations. The following actions involving protected trees require issuance of a ministerial tree permit:

- To remove a hazardous tree.
- To remove, alter or encroach into the TPZ of a tree that interferes with public utilities, public safety (i.e., at parks, traffic visibility, per Fire Dept.), or emergency vehicles. Includes fire brush clearance tree *removal*.
- To remove an Introduced Protected Tree on private property.
- To remove, alter or encroach into the TPZ of a tree that interferes with existing private sewer line.
- To remove, alter or encroach into the TPZ of a tree whose roots or limbs interfere with existing structures.
- To remove, alter or encroach into the TPZ of a tree to allow for reasonable use of property. Applies to pruning for utilities on private property. No more than 5 trees (cumulatively) may be altered or encroached upon; only 3 may be oaks or sycamores; no historical or heritage trees.
- To remove 6 to 25 trees in 12 months for agriculture; no historical trees.

Right-of-Way

Public roads are located within land which is referred to as road right-of-way. Within a typical road right-of-way, the following public facilities can be found: the driving surface, roadside shoulders and ditch, public utilities, sidewalks, and traffic signs. The road right-of-way is owned by the agency having jurisdiction over that specific roadway.

Scenic Resources Protection Zone

1) Scenic resource areas are areas as may be identified by an area plan; and 2) The area encompassing lakes and the viewshed extending from the lakes to the highest ridgeline surrounding the lakes. The County lakes included are: Lake Casitas, Lake Matilija, Lake Piru, and Lake Sherwood. Scenic Resource Areas are depicted on the Resource Protection Map in the County's General Plan.

Tree Protection Zone (TPZ)

The surface and subsurface area within the dripline and extending a minimum of 5 feet outside the dripline, or 15 feet from the trunk of a tree, whichever is greater.

