

Town of Hartford, Vermont
COMPREHENSIVE TREE POLICY

A. Purpose of the Policy:

1. Establish and maintain the environmental values of Town public trees;
2. Preserve the tree canopy through accepted tree maintenance practices;
3. Educate the public of the economic, health and social welfare benefits that trees provide; and the positive character trees contribute to the town.
4. Recognize and protect Public and Heritage trees.

B. Definitions that apply to the Policy:

1. **Public Trees:** Trees, shrubs and all other woody vegetation on any Town park, or other property owned or controlled by the Town on any public street, alley, median, sidewalk or highway within the public right-of-way, school district site trees and easements.
2. **Heritage Trees:** A tree designated as a "heritage tree" is based on size, character, species, age or historical significance. "Heritage tree" shall mean any public tree having a self-supporting woody main stem or trunk usually characterized by the ability to grow to considerable height and size and the development of woody branches at some distance above the ground.

C. Authority and Administration of the Policy:

The Tree Warden shall have the authority and administrative responsibility to apply the policy by use of Town employees, Tree Board members, or private contractors of the (same as above) shall include but not be limited to, the following:

1. Prepare an annual program for tree planting and care of public trees in the Town under the guidance of the Tree Policy;
2. Inspect the planting, maintenance, and removal of all public trees;
3. Determine necessity of street and park tree removal;
4. Prepare and maintain all necessary maps, plans, and records relating to the functions carried on under this ordinance.
5. Work in an advisory capacity with the planning and zoning boards in reviewing proposed project applications.
6. Insure assessment process is conducted before private contractors work on public trees.
7. Initiate a stop-work order for violations of any part of the tree policy.

D. Tree Board:

To created and established a Tree Board for the Town which shall consist of five members who will be appointed by the Hartford Selectboard. Term of Office: the term of the five persons shall be three years. In the event that a vacancy shall occur during the term of any member, a successor shall be appointed for the remainder of the term.

1. **Compensation:** Members of the Board shall serve without compensation.

2. **Duties and Responsibilities:** The Board shall study, investigate, counsel and develop and/or update annually and recommend a written plan for the care, preservation, pruning, planting, replanting, removal or disposition of trees, shrubs, plants and other landscaping in parks, along streets and in other public areas. Such plan will be presented annually to the Selectboard for acceptance and approval. Board will conduct educational activities, to include Arbor Day event.
3. The Tree Board shall develop a set of by-laws to be approved by the Board of Selectmen.

E. Heritage Tree Designation:

The Town may designate any public tree in the Town which meet(s) the following criteria as a "Heritage" Tree:

1. Any tree that has a trunk with a circumference of 43 inches (approximately 14 inches in diameter or more), measured at 54 inches above existing grade;
2. Any public tree that has historical significance, including but not limited to those that were/are:
3. Any public tree that has horticultural significance, including but not limited to those which is: planted as a commemorative; planted during a particularly significant historical era; or marking the spot of an historical event.
4. Unusually beautiful or distinctive;
5. Old (determined by comparing the age of the public tree in question with other trees of its species within the Town);
6. Distinctive specimen in size or structure for its species (determined by comparing the tree to average trees of its species within the Town);
7. A rare or unusual species for the New England regional area (to be determined by the number of similar trees of the same species within the Town);
8. Providing a valuable habitat; or Identified by the town Selectboard as having significant arboricultural value to the citizens of the Town.

F. Tree Planting, Maintenance and Removal:

1. The following planting specifications will be followed:
 - a. **Species:** Only small species may be planted in the public right-of-way and on public property if the planting site is under or within 15 lateral feet of any overhead utility wires.
 - b. **Spacing and Distance:** Trees should be planted based on available green space and soil volume and taking into consideration canopy size. Limitations on planting may occur due to sight and utility issues.
 - c. **Tree Selection and Purchase:** Trees purchased for public tree planting must meet arboricultural standards for size, quality, health and potential for successful growth (region). The Town has the right to reject plant material that does not meet these standards and/or do not meet the required conditions of the zoning and planning boards.
2. The following practices will be adhered to for maintenance and removal of trees:
 - a. **Pruning and Tree Care:** All tree pruning, care, and removal of public trees must be completed in accordance with the latest version of the American National Standards Institute.

b. **Removal:** Any public tree scheduled for removal must have approval of the Tree Warden. Consideration must be given to replacing the existing large public trees if in the event the tree must be removed.

c. **Removal of Stumps:** The removal of any stumps of public trees shall not be mandatory unless it is deemed necessary by the Town to allow for a replanting or other reasons. The Town must find that the removal of the stump is necessary for other than just aesthetic reasons. Any landowner with property adjacent to any stump may petition the Town to allow removal of said stump at the landowner expense for the purpose of aesthetics.

G. Public Nuisances – Hazard Tree:

The following conditions are hereby declared a hazard tree:

1. Any living or standing tree or part thereof that is in a condition and location that jeopardizes public health, safety, and property. Any tree or shrub or portion thereof, that interferes with the flow of traffic or obstructs visibility on any public street, sidewalk, highway, alley or easement. The standard for rating the level of risk of a tree will be the USDA Forest Service hazards evaluation form (modified version for New England).

H. References that apply to Policy

The Town of Hartford Parks Ordinance and Tree Warden VT State Statutes is a reference in following through with the Tree Policy.

Adopted by the Board of Selectmen Hartford, Vermont ... September 30, 2003