

HUME CITY COUNCIL

POLICY

STREET AND RESERVE TREE POLICY

Policy Ref. No:	CP2004/09/60
Date Adoption:	27 September 2004
Date Amended:	
Date of Review:	
Responsible Officer:	Manager Parks and Open Spaces
Department:	Parks and Open Spaces

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The aim of this policy is to document Hume City Council's commitment to improving the appearance of the City through the maintenance and enhancement of its street and reserve trees.
- 1.2 This policy is linked directly to the ideals expressed in the Hume 2030 plan and is moving towards the vision outlined in that plan.
- 1.3 Street and reserve trees contribute to the appearance of the City through their aesthetic value, by providing identity and character. In addition, trees contribute to improving urban environments by absorbing heat, providing shade, reducing solar radiation, providing habitat, utilising storm water run-off and assisting in air purification.
- 1.4 In order to sustain this contribution, maintain community safety and satisfy the community's needs, trees need to be consistently managed according to current 'best practice' in arboriculture and Council's commitments, as documented in the Council Plan.
- 1.5 Management of trees from planting to removal includes planning for new trees, community consultation, determining planting location, tree species selection, planting, maintenance and pruning methods and removal of dead or dangerous trees.
- 1.6 This policy defines how Hume City Council will manage trees in the City and therefore, will assist residents, property owners, authorities, Council officers, contractors, developers and those working with Council to understand the City's requirements for the management of street and reserve trees.

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2. POLICY STATEMENT

2.1 Tree Planting

- 2.1.1 Tree planting season is generally between the months of May – September as this is the optimal time to ensure planting success.
- 2.1.2 All tree planting undertaken on public managed land throughout the City must comply with the Council requirements articulated in the documents listed in the Related Documents section. These documents are available by contacting Council or accessing Council's Internet site.
- 2.1.3 Council will select species of tree for planting that are suitable for, and perform well within the site, and that have the ability to contribute positively to the City's environment.
- 2.1.4 Proposed tree planting for new developments and subdivisions must comply with Council's 'Recommended Species List' and 'Tree Planting and Establishment Specifications', unless approved by Council.
- 2.1.5 Residents are not permitted to plant trees (or shrubs) within the nature strip, other sites within the road reserve or in a Council managed park, unless written Council approval is obtained.
- 2.1.6 No compensation will be available to residents for the removal of trees and shrubs that have been planted without Council permission. Notification will be given to allow residents to remove planted material. If not actioned within three weeks, Council staff or contractors will remove the planted material to allow other planting to occur.

2.2 Tree Pruning

- 2.2.1 Tree pruning by Council will be in accordance with Australian Standard 4373-1996.
- 2.2.2 Council will maintain tree clearances in accordance with the current and relevant State Government legislation (ie. the minimum clearance between trees and services, road signs etc). Council will prune trees under powerlines in compliance with the Powerline Management plan submitted annually to the Office of the Chief Electrical Inspector (OCEI).
- 2.2.3 Residents or property owners have the legal right to prune off overhanging foliage into their property from a tree located on a neighbouring property, including one located on public land.
- 2.2.4 However, if a Council street or reserve tree requires pruning, residents or property owners must request the pruning service be provided by Council's Parks & Open Space Department.
- 2.2.5 If a resident or property owner damages a Council street or reserve tree,

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makes the tree structurally unsound or reduces the aesthetics through inappropriate pruning, Council will seek reimbursement of the damage and the lost amenity value of the tree under Council Local Law or criminal damage through the court system.

2.2.6 The cost of repair to the damaged tree will be based on commercial rates.

2.3 Tree Removal

2.3.1 Council will only remove trees if one or more of the criteria set out in its 'Tree Removal Criteria' are met, ie. Pose a danger to the public, is dead, poor performing or are inappropriate species for details see appendix 4.

2.3.2 Council will inform and consult with residents on street tree removal decisions via a letter. Residents are given 10 working days to respond. Residents may make a submission about the decision to remove a tree, which will be considered before any works occur.

2.3.3 If a tree is found to present an immediate danger to the public the tree will be removed immediately and a notice will be left in the residents mailbox explaining the reason for removal.

2.3.4 If a Council reserve requires more than 20% of the trees removed at any one time then the surrounding residents will be informed in writing and are given 10 working days to respond, and then the tree or trees will be removed. Residents may make a submission about the decision to remove a tree, which will be considered before any works occur.

2.4 Significant Trees

2.4.1 Trees located within areas that have a Neighbourhood Character Policy as listed in the Hume Planning Scheme or Heritage Controls will require trees in this area to be protected. This requires Council consent before any works that may damage these trees can go ahead.

2.4.2 Council identifies and manages 'trees of significance' within the City. Trees are classified as 'significant', if one or more criteria are fulfilled from Council's 'Tree Significance Criteria', eg. Environmental, cultural, historical or horticultural value to the City.

2.4.3 Council will develop a management plan for each tree or group of trees, outlining strategies to maximise health, longevity and public safety, as well as the criteria for removal and replacement decisions, where appropriate.

3. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 A Tree Management Strategy will be developed to implement this policy.

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- 3.1.1 The Strategy will have an emphasis on informing and consulting with the community.
- 3.1.2 The Strategy will include the enhancement or development of systems and processes to enable the effective management of trees, eg. Electronic systems that can easily identify exact tree location and maintenance history.

4. RELATED DOCUMENTS

4.1 Criteria

- 4.1.1 Criteria for Selection of Tree Planting Sites (Appendix 1).
- 4.1.2 Criteria for Tree Species Selection (Appendix 2).
- 4.1.3 Tree Significance Criteria (Appendix 3).
- 4.1.4 Tree Removal Criteria (Appendix 4).

4.2 Specifications

- 4.2.1 Plant Material Supply Specification. (Technical Notes)
- 4.2.2 Tree Planting Specification. (Technical Notes)
- 4.2.3 Tree Establishment Specification. (Technical Notes)

4.3 Guidelines

- 4.3.1 Design Principle Guidelines for Streetscape and Parkland Planting.
- 4.3.2 Guidelines for the Planning, Design and Construction of Open Space.
- 4.3.3 Neighbourhood Character Study and Heritage Study.

4.4 Procedures

- 4.4.1 Tree Removal Procedure.

4.5 Information Sheets

- 4.5.1 Tree Root Management (Technical Notes)

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APPENDIX 1: CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF TREE PLANTING SITES

The following criteria will be used for the selection of tree planting sites throughout the municipality.

- A. Suitable unrestricted opportunities in high profile sites, eg. Entrances to the City, commercial precincts, and major roads.
- B. Identify and utilise suitable tree planting opportunities in relatively treeless areas, such as in under-developed parks, nature strips, median strips, car parks and traffic treatments where space allows.
- C. Integrate park upgrades and developments, (Capital Works, NIP), with tree planting in adjacent streets.
- D. Identify opportunities for tree planting in new subdivisions. Unless otherwise required by a condition of the development approval. Street and reserve trees are to be planted by the developer in accordance with this policy and the guidelines for the Planning, Design & Construction of Open Space.
- E. Integrate road and footpath reconstruction with tree replacement and planting programs where possible and appropriate. Explore and incorporate opportunities to change existing road alignment design to provide quality opportunities for tree planting and streetscape improvement.

Removal and replacement works will be undertaken in a staged process. This program will identify unsuitable street trees (eg. high maintenance trees under powerlines) and prioritise removals and replacement with appropriate species.

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APPENDIX 2: CRITERIA FOR TREE SPECIES SELECTION

The selection of tree species for street and parkland planting's is determined by the specific requirements of the location and the individual planting site. The emphasis is on suitability of size, biological tolerances, character, uniformity and low maintenance requirements. The following is a summary of the criteria to be considered when undertaking selection of tree species.

Good tree management starts with appropriate species selection that takes into account the aesthetic, biological, and functional requirements of a particular site.

A list of recommended tree species for use within Hume City Council's streetscapes and reserves is available from Councils' Parks and Open Spaces Department. This list should not be considered definitive. New species and developed varieties of trees are regularly introduced into the market, therefore scope for trials with these trees should be considered.

A. Aesthetic Issues

The ability for species to enhance the visual amenity of a streetscape or area is an important consideration.

Maintain and enhance The existing dominant landscape character of any particular area of the City should be maintained and enhanced.

B. Biological and Ecological Considerations

The biological requirement for tree selection primarily comprises the species tolerance of stress with regard to general climatic suitability, soil oxygen levels, soil compaction, drought, pest and diseases, high wind and atmospheric pollution. Achieving high tolerance levels should produce trees capable of establishing and producing aesthetic and other benefits.

Environmental weeds are invasive plants that compete successfully with indigenous plant communities. The use of tree species that are known to be, or have the potential to become, environmental weeds will be avoided throughout the City. These species of plants will not be planted within nominated biodiversity corridors.

C. Tree Diversity

The most beneficial approach for planting is to plant desirable tree types that are adapted and proven to perform in the City. Undesirable diversity can lead to trees that contribute less than their costs.

Species diversity of the overall tree population reduces the incidence of disease and insect outbreak.

Diversity of age is possibly more advantageous in creating a sustainable tree resource. A continual replanting program that staggers the ages of street trees could lessen the denuding of the streetscape during periodic removals.

Relatively new release varieties and untried species should not be tested on particularly difficult sites or sites with high public use.

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D. Functional Issues

Species will be selected that do not require excessive resource input to maintain them in a safe and aesthetically pleasing manner. Tree species known to cause excessive damage to infrastructure via root systems will be avoided.

Species will be selected that can maintain spatial constraints within a street, eg. Pedestrian and vehicle clearances, overhead powerline clearances, root volume restraints, underground services, etc.

Maintenance solutions may also be considered in species selection, including cyclic crown modification works to maintain the planting in line with design intent, ie. Regular clipping of topiary plantings in commercial areas.

Functional characteristics to be considered in the tree selection process are:

- Matching the trees anticipated size at maturity to the available soil volume, area and zone of upheaval.
- Utilising trees known to have restricted crown widths that fit available above ground space eg. Narrow streets, main roads.
- Matching the trees anticipated size and water usage at maturity to the available soil volume and climate.
- Using species of tree known for their structural integrity and stock that are known to have received appropriate formative treatment whilst in the nursery.
- Selection of deciduous species where solar access is required during the winter months and shade is beneficial during the hotter months.
- Utilising long-lived species to gain the greatest return on the original expenditure.

E. Tree Availability

Council purchases all tree stock from the commercial nursery trade, or private tree farms. For street planting programs, with proposals for long street runs, it is essential that the proposed trees be readily available. The need for pre-planning is essential.

F. Health Considerations

Effect on human health should be considered in selection of trees. Some trees are difficult for maintenance workers eg. *Lagunaria patersonia* (Norfolk Island Hibiscus) or early seasonal growth of *Platanus* spp. (Plane Tree); others may cause allergies or exacerbate respiratory complaints. Thorns, spines, excessive fruit drop can also cause injury.

Species selection will utilise trees that have no known toxic or allergenic characteristics.

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APPENDIX 3: TREE SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

The following criterion (adapted from National Trust Australia, Victoria) is to be used to determine suitability of single and groups of trees for listing as significant trees. Trees are to be considered significant when they fulfil one or more criterion.

Category	Title	Description	Types
1	Horticultural Value	Any tree that is of outstanding horticultural or genetic value and could be an important source of propagating stock, including specimens that are particularly resistant to disease or exposure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tolerance selection (Pest & disease) - Propagating potential - Scientific value
2	Location or Context	Any tree that occurs in a unique location or context and so provides a major contribution to the landscape, including remnant native vegetation, important landmarks and trees that form part of an historic garden, park or precinct.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Historic garden or park - Historic cemetery - Important landmark - Remnant native vegetation - End of natural range - Contribution to landscape - Historic planting style
3	Rare or Localised	Any tree of a species or variety that is rare or of very localised distribution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only known species - Rare species (2 to 50 known specimens) - End of natural range - Disjunct community
4	Particularly Old	Any tree that is particularly old or venerable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Old specimen
5	Outstanding Size	Any tree outstanding for its large height, trunk circumference or canopy spread.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Height - Circumference - Canopy spread - Combinations of above
6	Aesthetic Value	Any tree of outstanding aesthetic significance.	
8	Historical Value	Any tree commemorating a particular occasion, including plantings by notable people, or having associations with an important event in local history.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultural group - Public welfare - WW1 - WW2 - British Royalty - Other Royalty - Visiting dignitary - Australian public figure - Victorian public figure - Local public figure
9	Aboriginal Content	Any tree that has a recognise association with historic aboriginal activities, including scar trees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scarred tree - Corroboree tree

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10	Outstanding Example of Species	Any tree that is an outstanding example of its species.	
11	Outstanding Habitat Value	Any tree that has outstanding value as habitat for indigenous wildlife, including providing breeding, foraging or roosting habitat, or forming a key part of a wildlife corridor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Breeding habitat - Foraging habitat - Wildlife corridor

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APPENDIX 4: TREE REMOVAL CRITERIA

Tree removal, will be approved if the tree meets one or more of the criteria set out below. The tree removal criterion is used to prevent indiscriminate removal. Safety is the priority, however, aesthetic and ecological factors, including wildlife habitat will be considered when making all tree management and removal decisions.

The tree or tree group needs to be inspected and assessed for the above criteria by a qualified arborist. Tree health (vigour), structure, Useful Life Expectancy (ULE), and hazard potential must be assessed.

Trees that are to be handed over to Council from developers must have a ULE of greater than ten years otherwise the trees should be removed prior to hand over to Council management. The exception is in areas of high conservation where the trees contribute to the habitat values of a site. In these cases, public safety will be addressed through the use of appropriate pruning works, advisory signage and design of open spaces to discourage / prevent public access.

Council acknowledges that some residents have concerns with the leaf litter, fruit, bark or other debris that a tree may shed over the seasons. However, tree removals will not be authorised based on this reason alone.

Trees and groups of trees may be removed only when one or more of the following criteria are met.

- That is dead or close to death. Exceptions considered where tree or tree group is located in indigenous vegetation conservation sites.
- Infected with a disease where the recommended control is not applicable and removal is the recommended practice to prevent transmission.
- Poses a severe safety hazard that cannot be corrected by pruning, transplanting or other treatments.
- Severely interferes with a neighbouring tree or tree group to the extent that neither tree can develop to its full potential. The more desirable tree will be preserved.
- The aesthetic values are so low or negative that the site is visually enhanced by the tree removal.
- Work improvements or infrastructure repair or maintenance required to be made around the tree or tree group will kill or render the tree a hazard or significantly impact on the trees condition and useful life expectancy.
- The tree is **substantially** contributing to damages or nuisance to public or private property and no other viable means are available to rectify the situation.
- The tree or group of trees is included in the street tree rejuvenation program as identified by Council.

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