



City of Healdsburg

# **Heritage Trees**

## **Frequently Asked Questions**



# Heritage Trees: Frequently Asked Questions

## What is the purpose of the heritage-tree ordinance?

The purpose is to protect certain trees to preserve Healdsburg's cultural heritage, maintain and enhance the scenic beauty of the community, improve air quality, help abate soil and slope erosion, and preserve and enhance property values.

## Where can I find the City's heritage-tree ordinance?

The ordinance is included in the City's Land Use Code, in Section 20.24.035 at this link: <https://www.codepublishing.com/CA/Healdsburg/#!/Healdsburg20/Healdsburg2024.html#20.24.035>

## What is a heritage tree?

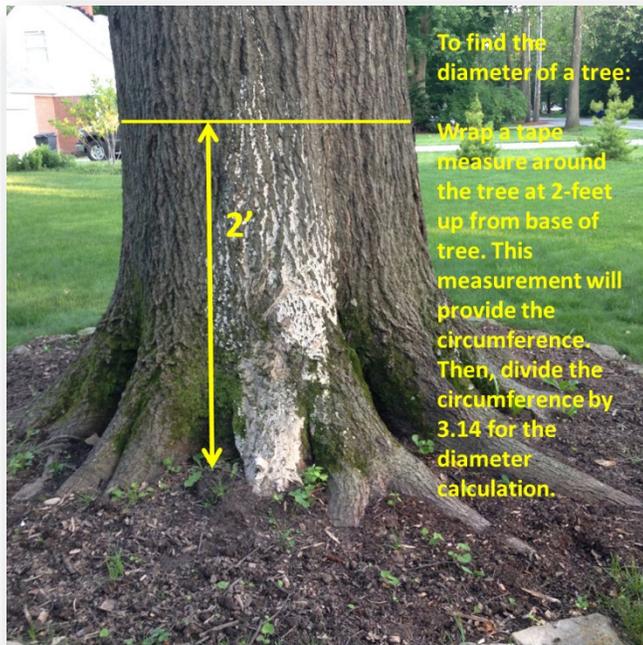
A heritage tree in Healdsburg is any tree that has a diameter of 30 inches or more, measured two feet above level ground, or any tree or group of trees identified by City Council resolution upon finding that the tree or group of trees:

- Is of historic value because of its association with a place, building, natural feature or event of local, regional, national or historic significance.
- Is identified on any historic or cultural resources survey as a significant feature of a landmark, historic site or historic district.
- Is representative of a significant period of the City's growth or development and was the result of a planting dedicated by citizens, civic groups or the City

## How should I measure the diameter of a tree?

Simply wrap a tape measure around the trunk two feet up from the ground and note the measurement.

This will provide the *circumference* of the tree. Then, divide the circumference of the tree by 3.14. Doing so will provide the *diameter* of the tree.



## What are common issues with large trees?

Large trees located in urban areas can sometimes present problems for property owners, neighbors, and pedestrians. Typical issues related to large trees are property damage from large roots, falling limbs, disease, and pests.

## If I have any of these issues with a tree on my property, can I remove the tree?

If the tree **is not** of a size to be considered a heritage tree, then yes, the tree may be removed without the need for any City permits. If the tree **is** a heritage tree, it may be removed without permits only under certain circumstances.

## What are the circumstances where a City permit would not be required?

- A. Removal of any tree not classified or listed as a heritage tree.
- B. Routine maintenance, including trimming of street trees and trimming of trees on private property by a utility company licensed by the public utilities commission to maintain required clearances around utility installations.
- C. Emergency circumstances if personal injury or property damage is imminently threatened in the judgment of the public works director, Community Development Director, police chief, fire chief, electrical utility director or City manager.
- D. Removal of a heritage tree that is dead or so diseased or damaged that it is no longer viable, as determined jointly by the City arborist and Community Development Director.
- E. Removal of a heritage tree on a parcel developed with a single-family dwelling, provided the property is not capable of further land subdivision.

## What if none of these circumstances apply?

If none of the above exemptions apply and the tree is a heritage tree, **then a City-issued heritage-tree removal permit is required prior to removal of the tree.**

The permit-application submittal checklist can be found at the following link: <https://www.ci.healdsburg.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/849/Heritage-Tree-Protection-PDF>

A tree assessment prepared by a certified arborist must be submitted with the permit application as well as the application fee as noted in the City's Master Fee Schedule online. The assessment will then be peer-reviewed by the city arborist and the application will be acted upon by the City's Planning Commission at a regularly scheduled meeting.

After the application approval, replacement trees must be planted at a ratio of 3:1 as a condition of permit approval. Here's information on tree replacement in Section 20.24.075 of the Land Use Code: <https://www.codepublishing.com/CA/Healdsburg/#!/Healdsburg20/Healdsburg2024.html#20.24.075>



### **Are any other City permits required for tree removal?**

In some cases, a City-issued encroachment permit may be required. Encroachment permits are issued by the City's public works department. Encroachment permits are required if the tree-removal process involves any impacts to the City's public right-of-way, including but not limited to the temporary closure of a public sidewalk or street to accommodate a crane or other tree removal machinery. **Prior to any tree removal, we recommend that you contact the Public Works Department at (707) 431-3346 to inquire if an encroachment permit will be required.**

### **Are there City standards for trimming and maintenance of heritage trees?**

The city arborist recommends the following link, which includes information on tree trimming and maintenance: <http://www.treesaregood.org/treeowner/pruningyourtrees>. A more in-depth guide can be found here for purchase: <https://www.isa-arbor.com/store/product/124/>.

### **Are there penalties for removing or harming a heritage tree without a City permit?**

Yes. Unpermitted removal of a heritage tree or any trimming or maintenance which results in a damaged or dead tree will result in a code violation and is also considered a misdemeanor and will include a fine equal to the valuation of the tree as determined by the city arborist.

### **Is it legal to trim a section of a neighbor's tree if it extends onto an adjacent property?**

While not included in the City ordinance, state law allows neighbors to trim and maintain overhanging trees as long there is no damage to the health or welfare of the tree. These laws apply to residential, commercial, and industrial sites. We recommend that you consult with an arborist prior to performing any tree work.

### **Are there regulations for tree protection during construction?**

Yes. The City's Land Use Code contains specific measures to protect the health and welfare of heritage trees during construction or any site disturbance such as grading, trenching, or excavation. Note that these measures also apply to non-heritage trees which require protection. Prior to any site disturbance, we recommend that you consult an arborist for recommended protection measures.

You can find specific information on tree protection at the following link:

<https://www.codepublishing.com/CA/Healdsburg/#!/Healdsburg20/Healdsburg2024.html#20.24.035>

### **May I remove or trim a heritage tree in an emergency without a permit?**

If people or property are imminently threatened, the heritage-tree ordinance requires that you immediately contact the City's Public Works Director, Community Development Director, Police Chief, Fire Chief, Utility Director, or the City Manager. Upon notifying any of the above, a City representative will promptly assess the situation on the site and determine the removal of the tree or limb.

In an emergency, please call (707) 431-3346 and you will be connected to the appropriate City staff member.