



Tree Preservation and Replacement Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q1: With the adoption of the new City of Chamblee Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), what are the regulations governing tree protection for the City of Chamblee, and how have they changed?

A1: Chapter 320, Article 4 of the City of Chamblee Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) entitled Tree Preservation and Replacement Regulations govern tree protection.

The purpose of these regulations is to ensure and facilitate the preservation and/or replacement of trees and landscape as part of the land development process. The regulations in the new UDO are based on the following previous regulations:

- The City of Chamblee Tree Preservation Ordinance Guidelines;
- Article XIV, Landscape Requirements, of the City Zoning Ordinance; and
- Chapter 34, Article IX, Preservation of Trees, of the City Code of Ordinances.

The UDO consolidated and streamlined all these regulations into one code. Some of the revisions we made include::

- Banned invasive tree/shrub /grass/groundcovers.
- Revised definition of landscape strip, buffer, and open space.
- Eliminated inconsistencies in the landscape standards for parking lots, landscape strips and streetscapes. Clarified operation of the tree bank.
- Clarified tree removal provisions for individual trees on commercial/industrial property.
- Added provisions for removal of specimen trees and limited tree removal on single family lots.
- Specified a percentage of damage allowed to a critical root zone (30%) before a tree or specimen tree is considered lost. Addressed protection of trees on property lines or adjacent to property line.
- Added requirements of species limits (30%/20%/10% to encourage species diversity) in buffer zone
- Updated staking detail requirements. Staking is not necessary in most situations and actually damages the trees.
- Changed mulch requirements
- Add provisions related to maintenance bonds.

Q2: Does the City of Chamblee have a City Arborist (or Landscape Coordinator) and what is their role?

A2: Yes, under the provisions of UDO Section 320-5, the City Manager shall appoint a City Landscape Coordinator.

The City Landscape Coordinator enforces the tree preservation and replacement provisions of the UDO, including the permitting of trees on privately owned property. They also are called upon to conduct the following duties:

- Advise the City regarding the specifications and standards of practice governing the planting, maintenance, removal, fertilization, pruning, and bracing of trees in public areas as well as the planting and maintenance of landscape strips and buffers.
- Review permit requests and site development plans submitted to the City and make recommendations concerning them to the City.

- Conduct follow-up and final inspections as appropriate.

Q3: Do I need a permit to remove a tree on my own property?

A3: Depends on the use of the property. On property that is being used for single-family residential, you may remove no more than five non-specimen trees from a property in one given year without a permit. The removal of 6 or more non-specimen trees or a specimen tree will require a permit. Tree removal in the building or development process is subject to a land disturbance permit and must conform to the City's tree preservation and replacement standards in Chapter 320 of the UDO.

Q4: What is a specimen tree?

A4: A specimen tree is a tree that qualifies for preservation due to its size, type, condition, location or historical significance. See Section 320-35, Specimen Trees.

Any tree in fair or better condition, which equals or exceeds the following diameter sizes:

- Large Hardwoods Trees: 24-inches DBH or larger - such as oaks, hickories, yellow poplars, sweetgums, etc.
- Large Softwoods Trees: 30-inches DBH or larger - such as pines, deodar cedars, etc.
- Understory Trees: 4-inches DBH or larger- such as dogwoods, redbuds, sourwoods, etc.

Q5: What is diameter at breast height (DBH)?

A5: The standard measure of tree size for existing trees is measured as the diameter in inches. The tree trunk is measured at a height of four and one-half (4.5) feet above the ground. If a tree splits into multiple trunks below four and one-half (4.5) feet, then the trunk is measured at its most narrow point beneath the split. Trees with less than four and one-half (4.5) feet of clear trunk shall be measured as the diameter of the largest vertical branch or leader at breast height.

Q6: Do I need a permit to remove a tree on city property?

A6: Yes, utility companies, private contractors, outside governments, and individuals must apply for and procure a permit, comply with tree protection and replacement administrative guidelines to this article to protect and preserve City properties in any modification of their landscape. Written plans outlining purpose, proposed operations, and approximate dates shall be submitted to the Development Director for approval.

Q7: How do I obtain a permit to remove a tree(s) on private property?

A7: It depends on why the tree is to be removed. Tree permit applications to remove a dead, dying, diseased or hazardous tree are obtained from the City of Chamblee Development Department or via the city's website. There is a \$150.00 fee for the application of the permit. Tree removal is subject to approval of the Landscape Coordinator. Trees that must be removed to allow construction would be subject to review and approval of a land disturbance permit. Plan review by the Landscape Coordinator is required for this permit.

Q8: Why do I need a permit?

A8: The city manages the natural resource of the urban forest. To obtain the minimal loss of mature tree canopy the city requires a permit for removal. Trees that qualify as dead, dying, diseased, or hazardous may be removed after the tree is inspected and conditions verified. Healthy trees that are removed under a construction or landscape purpose are assessed a recompense amount.

Q9: What are the Chamblee Tree Density requirements?

A9: All applicable sites shall maintain a minimum tree density of 100 inches DBH per acre. Existing residential sites applying for permits pertaining to the exclusions of Section 320-30(b)(1) shall maintain a minimum of 50 inches DBH per acre.

Q10: What are the criteria for achieving density requirements?

A10: Trees replanted to achieve density requirements should be selected from the Tree Species Selection List found in Addendum 2.0 and shall meet the requirements of Subsection 320-3(c). In addition, replanting should be at the ratio of not less than one overstory tree for every three understory trees. Density credit may be met by planting all overstory trees, but not by planting only understory trees.

Q11: What is recompense?

A11: Recompense is a dollar value to the city of a tree on private or public property used for the purpose of calculating the cost for removal or destruction. The dollar value shall be maintained in the Tree Preservation and Protection Fee Schedule maintained by the City.

Q12: Where does the recompense money go?

A12: Monies collected from recompense go into the Chamblee Tree Bank Fund. These monies shall be used for tree plantings in public spaces as approved in the annual budgeting process or as directed by City Council.

Q13: Does Chamblee have a list of approved Tree Species?

A13: Yes. A list of overstory and understory can be found within the Tree Species Selection List of Addendum 2.0, Buffer, Landscaping, and Tree Preservation Administrative Guidelines.

Q14: Do I need a permit to prune my trees?

A14: A permit is not required for the pruning of trees on private property.

Q15: Can I prune the trees on the City property, such as the right-of-way?

A15: An encroachment permit is required to plant, remove or prune trees within the public right of way. Contact the Chamblee Public Works Department.

Q16: Do I need a permit for a tree that has fallen over?

A16: A tree that has fallen and is being supported by the earth, another tree or a structure does not require a permit. Take photographs of the downed tree and keep. Contact the Development Department to notify the city of removal and the tree's condition. This is to protect you in the event of complaints of illegal removal.

Q17: What are the repercussions of illegal removal/destruction or injurious pruning practices?

A17: Any person, firm or corporation violating any provision of this article shall be punished as described in section 1-6, general penalty, of this Code, and in addition thereto may be enjoined from continuing the violation. Each tree cut, damaged or poisoned shall constitute a separate offense and shall be subject to a fine of \$1000.00 per specimen tree and \$500.00 per non-specimen tree as defined in Section 110-3, Definitions. Any tree, specimen or non-specimen, which is removed without the appropriate review and approval of the administrator must be replaced by trees with a total density equal to eight times the unit value of the tree(s) removed with a minimum four-inch tree caliper.

Q18: What are the criteria for a dead, dying, diseased, or hazardous tree?

A18: The tree must have uncorrectable defects severe enough to pose present danger to people or buildings under normal conditions as determined by the City Landscape Coordinator.

Q19: What are the fees for a tree removal permit?

A19: The Mayor and Council authorized a minimum fee of \$150 for a minor tree removal permit. A tree removal permit for three or more trees requires a major tree removal permit fee of \$300.