



T R E E

P R O T E C T I O N



What is the tree protection ordinance?

It is Article 9.4, "Tree Protection and Preservation" of the Charleston County Zoning and Land Development Ordinance (ZLDR).

When was this ordinance adopted?

It was adopted in February of 1989.

How does this ordinance apply to me as a homeowner?

Detached single-family residences must protect all trees that are considered Grand Trees.

What is a Grand Tree?

Any tree measuring 24" or greater diameter breast height (DBH), except pines. All Grand Trees are prohibited from removal unless a Grand Tree Removal Permit is issued.

What is diameter breast height (DBH)?

The total diameter, in inches, of a tree trunk or trunks measured 4 1/2' above existing grade at the base of the tree.

How does this ordinance apply to non-single family residential property?

All non-single family residential property in the unincorporated area of Charleston County must maintain a minimum of 20 protected trees or 160" per acre and additional landscape buffering along the property lines may be required. Any tree that measures 8" or greater in diameter is considered a protected tree.

What is the purpose of the screening and buffering ordinance?

The purpose of screening and buffering is to mitigate the effect between incompatible adjacent uses such as a commercial use adjacent to a residential use.

Can I use my existing trees on the site to help satisfy the screening and buffering requirements?

Yes, in fact we require that existing trees with a DBH of 8" of greater within the required buffers are preserved on all non-single family residential properties.

Do I need a permit to clear my land for development?

Yes, before clearing any piece of land, you must notify the Charleston County Zoning/Planning Department and obtain a Zoning Permit.

What do I need to obtain a Zoning Permit?

A tree survey drawn to an engineer's scale on a site plan or a preliminary plat including the location, size, and species of all Grand Trees and protected trees within 40' of proposed construction and/or land disturbance and within the buffers.

I plan to develop property for commercial use, do I need a survey?

Yes, a tree survey is required and should include all trees 8" caliper or greater.

Can I do my own survey?

A licensed Engineer, Land Surveyor, Registered Landscape Architect, or Certified Arborist must do the survey.

I have a Grand Tree that appears to be in bad health, do I need permission to remove it?

Yes, generally if a Grand Tree is in poor health or poses an imminent threat to public safety, a Grand Tree Removal Permit may be approved by Staff.

What about pruning a Grand Tree?

Removal of 3 or more limbs with an individual diameter of 6" or greater and excessive pruning or thinning that

exceeds more than 25% of the leaf surface shall require a Zoning Permit.

I have a Grand Tree, which is healthy, but I want to remove it, can it be removed?

To remove a healthy Grand Tree, a variance request must be submitted to the Charleston County Board of Zoning Appeals, where it must be proved that the tree presents a hardship. The requested Grand Tree(s) and protected tree(s) may be removed only where approved by the Board. The Board may require replacement trees.

If I cut down a healthy Grand Tree what will happen?

Removing Grand Tree without Permit approval would constitute a Zoning Violation. Where Grand Trees have been removed, trees shall be replaced in accordance with a replacement schedule approved by the Planning Director. The combined caliper of replacement trees may be equal to or 3 times the DBH of the Grand Tree. Additionally, a court summons may be issued to the property owner.

What about Forestry Operations, do I need a Zoning Permit to harvest the timber on my property?

Section 48-23-205 of the Code of Laws of South Carolina was approved on June 2, 2009. This amendment provides regulations, definitions, conditions, and exemptions for forestry activities. All forestry activities must meet the requirements of Section 48-23-205 in order to qualify for an exemption from local regulations and/or permitting stipulated by this amendment. In order to administer the provisions of Section 48-23-205, and give forestry activities the benefit of the exemption from local regulations, Charleston County is requesting that any company or individual planning timber harvesting contact the Zoning/Planning Department prior to commencing the harvest. A 5 year deferral of all permits may be applied to the property under this exemption.

PROTECTING TREES YIELDS SATISFYING RESULTS!

- WILDLIFE HABITAT
- GLARE CONTROL
- SOUND BARRIER

- SUMMER COOLING
- WINTER WARMING
- POLLUTANT FILTRATION

- SCREENING
- WINDBREAK
- AESTHETICS

T
R
E
E

C
A
R
E

What is the proper way to mulch?

Mulch helps to maintain soil moisture, improve soil conditions, and control the growth of weeds. The generally recommended mulching depth is 2"-4", and mulch should not be piled against the trunk of the tree.

Do I need to fertilize?

Before fertilizing, it is best to do a soil analysis test. Soil testing is available through the local Clemson University Extension Service office and will help determine the need for fertilization. Fertilizer should always be applied to moist soil and watered in afterward. The ideal time to fertilize is in the late winter or early spring.

How do I determine if a tree is diseased and if it has an insect problem?

Thorough inspection of the tree's roots, leaves, trunk, branches, and bark and careful examination of the surrounding landscape will help correctly diagnose tree health problems and select appropriate treatment. Environmental stresses often make trees more susceptible to insect problems and disease.

How do I avoid tree damage during construction?

Proper planning, advice from a professional arborist, erecting barricades, limiting access, and a basic understanding of tree care will aid in avoiding tree damage. Trees are usually damaged during construction through physical injury to the trunk and crown, root damage, soil compaction, adding soil over the root system, and exposure to environmental stresses. Impacted trees may not die immediately, but could decline over several years.

When should I prune a tree?

Pruning should be performed to remove dead, diseased, or broken branches, to correct structural problems, and to improve safety. Removing more than 25% of a tree's leaf surface in a single year may put too much stress on a tree leaving it vulnerable to insect and disease infestations. The best time to prune is in late winter or early spring.

Why hire an arborist?

Arborists are educated to provide proper tree care through pruning, fertilizing, disease and insect problem diagnosis and treatment, lightning protection, cabling and bracing for support, and removal. Membership in professional organizations, certification, proof of insurance, and references are some of the things to check when selecting an Arborist.

Charleston County Zoning & Planning Department

Lonnie Hamilton III,
Public Services Building
4045 Bridge View Drive
North Charleston, SC 29405



Phone: 843-202-7200
Fax: 843-202-7222

www.charlestoncounty.org

WHAT IS THE CHARLESTON COUNTY TREE ORDINANCE



DOES IT APPLY TO ME?

Trees are an essential natural resource, an invaluable economic resource, and a priceless aesthetic resource. Trees play a critical role in purifying air and water, providing wildlife habitat, and enhancing natural drainage of stormwater and sediment control. They also help conserve energy by providing shade and buffering different land uses and beautifying the landscape. The Tree Protection and Preservation regulations of the Charleston County Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance are intended to enhance the health, safety, and welfare of Charleston County citizens.
