

DUNWOODY COMMUNITY

Tree Protection and Removal - What to know

Trees are a vital component of the health and beauty of Dunwoody. They help to provide cleaner air, protect valuable soil from erosion, and are essential to the well-being of the ecosystem. Not to mention, they provide value to our property. For this reason, the city strives to protect this valuable, natural resource and one of the first steps is to educate Dunwoody residents regarding the City's tree regulations.

One of the more frequent problems homeowners encounter is when a tree encroaches into the 75 foot stream buffer. The stream buffer (also known as riparian buffer) is an area adjacent to a creek or stream which serves as a vegetated, protective area between a body of water and human activity. Stream buffers are addressed and protected by certain rules within the City Ordinance (Division 4, Sec. 16-76 – 80).

The stream buffer is essential to the protection of creeks and streams and typically contains vegetation that serves to keep the water and streambank shaded and prevent the erosion of soil into the water. Shade is extremely important because it keeps waters at an optimal temperature for the fish and other wildlife to thrive. Preventing soil from entering the water is also imperative as added soil can deplete the proper levels of oxygen required for fish and other biological life.

It is essential that homeowners are aware that removal of any vegetation or trees within the 75 foot buffer is strictly prohibited without prior approval from the City Arborist. If a tree service offers to do work within the 75 foot buffer the property owner should ask to see written approval from the City of Dunwoody or contact the City Arborist for confirmation. Otherwise, they run the risk that the



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work will be in violation of city codes and subject to Code Enforcement action. Violators may be issued a citation and be required to appear in court.

Homeowners should take the time to familiarize themselves with the type of tree removal and protective measures which are permissible on their property and within the stream buffers. To find out more about these and other tree regulations, please visit the Community Development Department section of the city's web site at www.dunwoodyga.gov or you may call the Community Development Department at 678.382.6800 or the Code Enforcement hotline at 678.382.6890.

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THE ROOTS OF DUNWOODY'S TREE FAMILY

The City of Dunwoody is distinctly unique in its extensive tree canopy coverage. Today, there are thousands of trees located on both public and private property throughout the city.

However, for over a century the region did not enjoy the extensive tree canopy coverage it enjoys now. During the booming agricultural era, most of the region in and around the Dunwoody area had been engaged primarily in row crop agricultural production for over 130 years, so it is likely that very few trees were retained on the farm.

The few trees that remained after the fields were cleared were typically found in the middle of large fields for resting the team of horses, along fence rows, adjacent to stream channels, on homesteads or in cemeteries.

As this area was formerly dominated by the open fields of row crop agriculture, one can imagine that most trees we see today within the City of Dunwoody and throughout this region were planted into new landscapes as the area was developed into residential subdivisions.

Since the transition from agricultural land use to subdivisions began in the late 1950's it can be inferred that most of the trees we see in the City landscape today are not much older than 60 to 75 years of age. In flood plains and along the creek banks where no agricultural activity occurred it may be possible to find trees older than this, but it must be remembered that the removal of trees for timber along stream banks was a common practice until the Clean Water Act was established in 1972 and these practices were discontinued.

Today, greater than 80 percent of the areas within the City of Dunwoody's publicly accessible parklands, green spaces and road right of ways, consist of undeveloped to minimally developed raw forested canopy.

The above narrative was excerpted from the Urban Canopy and Inventory Assessment delivered to the city by Arboguard Tree Specialists, Ecological Planning Group and AEC in 2012.