

Ayer Conservation Commission Policy:

Tree Removal

INTRODUCTION:

The Ayer Conservation Commission is frequently asked to allow the removal of trees within its jurisdiction which are within the footprint of proposed construction, or which are dead, dying, diseased or damaged and which therefore pose a threat to private or public property (“hazard trees”). The Commission reviews such requests under the Administrative Approval process or if more complex through a Notice of Intent (NOI) or Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA). The Ayer Conservation Commission operates under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (MGL 131 Section 40) and Regulations (310 CMR 10.00) as well as the Ayer Wetlands Bylaw (Article XXVI) and Regulations. These require the Commission to review any earth disturbance work within wetland Resource Areas and within their 100 feet Buffer Zones, as well as within 200-feet of a perennial stream or river (which includes, without limitation; marsh, wet meadow, vernal pool, reservoir, lake, pond, intermittent stream or land under water, or inundation by groundwater or surface water). The Commission review determines if the proposed work would adversely affect or “alter” the wetland Resource Area or Buffer Zones. This Policy provides a consistent approach to tree removal that protects the wetlands and their important functions and values, including those provided by trees within these areas.

Trees are an important part of our ecosystem, providing services and values that include: stormwater management and visual landscape, as well as provide a source of cleaner air by filtering pollutants, shading streets, and habitats for birds and other wildlife. The shade produced by trees helps reduce temperatures in the summer, and this in turn can reduce energy usage and air conditioning costs. Without trees/ greenery, developed areas can become oppressive “heat islands” with increased overall surface temperatures during long summer days. Trees and other greenery break up these developed spaces and cool the area with shade. With respect to wetland functions and values, trees also provide shade that maintains a favorable microclimate for wetlands plants, fish, reptiles, amphibians, and insects. Trees provide wildlife habitat features that include food, shelter, nesting, migratory and perching habitats. Dead limbs and hollow trunks provide unique spaces for small mammals and birds to build nests, dens, and shelter. Additionally, leaves shed by trees provide valuable nutrients, habitat complexity for overwintering organisms, and organic matter that supports the texture and fertility of soils.

POLICY:

In recognition of these values, the Commission has implemented this Tree Removal Policy governing the removal of all trees within the Commission’s jurisdictional areas as noted above.

- The removal of any tree(s) within the Commission’s jurisdictional area will require the

Conservation Agent, or a member of the Commission, perform a site inspection of the tree(s) marked for removal.

- The Conservation Agent may ask for an onsite meeting with a Massachusetts Certified Arborist or Tree Removal Company in order to discuss the health of the tree(s) and the details of the removal.
- The Commission recommends, where feasible, that a “snag” of at least 6 feet in height be left standing. The snag will provide valuable wildlife habitat.
- Where feasible the Commission recommends that any healthy tree removed with a 6-inch diameter at chest height, within the Commissions jurisdictional area be replaced at a ratio of 2:1 (two new trees for every one healthy tree removed), with a native tree species being used as the replacement trees (see approved Replacement Tree List) This to single-family lot, commercial development, or as part of a larger development or subdivision. The Replacement Tree List is preferred an Applicant may propose wildlife habitat placement with high wildlife value native shrubs in lieu of or in addition to tree.
- Shrubs shall be proposed at no less than a 4:1 ratio.
- Healthy trees can be considered hazardous trees if they are a danger to an existing structure.

For further information, please contact:

Conservation Agent

Town Hall, 1st Floor

1 Main St., Ayer MA, 01432

Phone: 978-772-8220 ext. 143

Email: concom@ayer.ma.us

Ayer Conservation Commission Guidelines for Reviewing Tree Removal Projects

Replacement Trees – Native To New England

Wetter Areas	Drier Areas
<i>Acer rubrum</i> (red maple)	<i>Acer saccharum</i> (sugar maple)
<i>Acer saccharoides</i> (silver maple)	<i>Betula papyrifera</i> (paper birch)
<i>Betula lenta</i> (sweet/black birch)	<i>Fagus grandifolia</i> (American beech)
<i>Betula nigra</i> (river birch)	<i>Juniperus virginiana</i> (eastern red cedar)
<i>Betula populifolia</i> (gray birch)	<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i> (tulip tree)
<i>Chamaecyparis thyoides</i> (Atlantic white cedar)	<i>Pinus strobus</i> (white pine)
<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i> (tupelo, black gum)	<i>Platanus occidentalis</i> (sycamore)
<i>Quercus bicolor</i> (swamp white oak)	<i>Prunus serotina</i> (black cherry)
<i>Tsuga canadensis</i> (Canada hemlock)*	<i>Quercus alba</i> (white oak)
	<i>Quercus coccinea</i> (scarlet oak)
	<i>Quercus palustris</i> (pin oak)
	<i>Quercus rubra</i> (red oak)
* <i>Tsuga canadensis</i> should only be planted if a long-term monitoring plan (approved by the Conservation Commission) is in place to control woolly adelgid.	<i>Quercus velutina</i> (black oak)
	<i>Tilia americana</i> (basswood)

High Wildlife Value Shrubs – Native to New England

Wetter Areas	Drier Areas
<i>Alnus incana</i> (<i>rugosa</i>) (Speckled Alder)	<i>Amelanchier spp.</i> (serviceberry)
<i>Clethra alnifolia</i> (Sweet Pepperbush)	<i>Swida alternifolia</i> (alternate-leaved dogwood)
<i>Swida amomum</i> (Silky Dogwood)	<i>Cornus racemosa</i> (gray dogwood)
<i>Ilex verticillata</i> (Winterberry Holly)	<i>Corylus americana</i> (American hazelnut)
<i>Salix discolor</i> (Pussy Willow)	<i>Hamamelis virginiana</i> (witch hazel)

Approved on December 15, 2022

<i>Vaccinium corymbosum</i> (Highbush Blueberry)	<i>Photinia melanocarpa</i> (black chokeberry)
<i>Viburnum dentatum</i> (Northern Arrowwood)	<i>Viburnum opulus</i> (highbush cranberry)