

Planning and Infrastructure

December 2015

ITEM DESCRIPTION: Tree and shrub pruning guidelines

Also refer to the [Tree Maintenance and arborist inspections](#) fact sheet.

Most trees will require pruning during their lifetime. There are several reasons for pruning a tree:

- Removal of dead branches or diseased material.
- To remove spindly wood and improve plant shape.
- To promote rapid growth.
- To control the shape, height and width of a tree.
- To alter a tree's shape if impacting on a building, walkway or pedestrian access.

Lopping and topping of trees are unacceptable practices.

These practices are detrimental to the tree as they increase the rate of shoot production and resulting regrowth is weak and prone to collapse. Lopping and topping practices also may reduce the lifespan of the tree as they open the way for fungal infections and insect attack.

Tree pruning guidelines

A professional tree surgeon or arborist should carry out pruning of mature trees as this type of work can be dangerous and requires the use of specialised equipment. Follow procurement guidelines to hire the arborist and ensure that they adhere to the Australian Standard for Pruning of Amenity Trees.

The following are different types of pruning that may be necessary.

- **Cleaning** – the removal of dead, dying, damaged, diseased or conflicting branches.
- **Crown lifting** – involves pruning of the lower branches to increase the clearance between the ground and the lower branches. This type of pruning allows physical access beneath the tree and sightlines between children and supervisors to be maintained. Maintain a minimum of 2.4 m head clearance under trees in access areas and always cut the branches being removed flush with the main trunk.

- **Crown thinning** – is carried out to allow more light through the crown or lessen the tree's wind resistance without altering the overall shape or size of the tree. The main structural branches of the tree are retained.
- **Crown reduction and reshaping** – is carried out to reduce a miss-shaped tree and reduces the size of the crown in height or spread or both. This type of pruning is carried out to prevent trees interfering with buildings and overhead services.
- **Root pruning** to allow the installation of a [root barrier](#) (refer other fact sheet) Root damage can result in death, disease or instability of the tree and should only be carried out by experienced arborists.

Branch removal should be carried out so that the cut is close to the branch collar (a thickening of the underside of a branch near where it joins the main trunk). The branch collar should not be damaged. The branch should first be undercut at approximately 5-10 cm beyond the branch collar to avoid bark stripping as the branch falls. A second cut should be made from above, 5-10 cm beyond the undercut. The remaining stump should then be removed without damaging the branch collar.

Prune shrubs as required to remove 'leggy' growth, encourage dense, bushy growth and control the shape and spread of the plant.

FUNDING SOURCE

Grounds maintenance is part of the school operational budget.