

**Town of Hartford, Vermont
COMPREHENSIVE TREE POLICY**

A. Purpose of the Policy:

1. Improve the health of the public tree infrastructure through accepted tree maintenance practices.
2. Educate the public the economic, health and social welfare benefits that trees provide.
3. Continue actions and initiatives developed on federal, state and local levels to mitigate the threats of invasive plants and foreign pests.
4. Recognize and protect Public Heritage trees.

B. Definitions that apply to the Policy:

1. **Public Trees:** Trees on any Town property, park or school district or within the public right-of-way including streets, alleys, medians, sidewalks, highways or easements.
2. **Heritage Trees:** A “Heritage Tree” is one especially valued on the basis of ~~on~~ size, character, species, age or historical significance. The primary purpose of this definition is to enable the Hartford Tree Board to create a Tree Register recording significant trees in the Town.

C. Authority and Administration of the Policy:

The Tree Warden shall have the authority and administrative responsibility to apply the policy, and with the collaboration of Town employees, Tree Board members, or with qualified private contractors as necessary, enact the following:

1. Prepare an annual program for tree planting and care of public trees.
2. ~~Inspect~~ Provide guidance for the planting and maintenance of public trees.
3. Determine the necessity of public tree removal.
4. Prepare and maintain maps, plans, and records relating to policy.
5. Work in an advisory capacity with the planning and zoning boards in reviewing proposed project applications.
6. Ensure an assessment process is conducted ~~before~~ to qualify private contractors working on public trees.
7. Initiate a stop-work order for violations of any part of the tree policy or violations under the Vermont Tree Warden Statutes.

8. Advocate relevant Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Programs, First Responder Programs as well as plans in place and to be developed by the Tree Warden, Tree Board and others to mitigate the threats of invasive plants, pests and disease.

D. Tree Board:

The Tree Board shall consist of no less than five and no more than seven members who will be appointed by the Hartford Selectboard.

Term of Office: the term of the members shall be two years. In the event that a vacancy shall occur during the term of any member, a successor shall be appointed for the remainder of the term.

1. **Compensation:** Members of the Board shall serve without compensation.

2. **Duties and Responsibilities:** The Board shall study, investigate and counsel the town on matters related to public trees, heritage trees and the comprehensive tree policy as well as promote educational activities including but not limited to fund raising, the annual Arbor Day event and public tree identification walks.

3. The Tree Board shall develop a set of by-laws to be approved by the Selectboard.

E. Heritage Tree Designation:

The Town may designate any public tree as a “Heritage Tree” if it meets any one of the following criteria:

1. Has a trunk with a circumference of 43 inches (approximately 14 inches in diameter or more), measured at 54 inches above existing grade.

2. Has historical significance.

3. Has horticultural significance, including but not limited to trees ~~which~~ that are: planted as a commemorative, planted during a particularly significant historical era, or marking the spot of an historical event.

4. Is unusually beautiful or distinctive.

5. Is old (determined by comparing the age of the public tree in question with other trees of its species within the Town).

6. Is distinctive in size or structure for its species (determined by comparing the tree to average trees of its species within the Town).

7. Is a rare or unusual species for the New England regional area (to be determined by the number of similar trees of the same species within the Town).

8. Provides valuable wildlife habitat or is identified as having significant arboricultural value to the citizens of Hartford.

9. Is on private property and upon request of the property owner is qualified as a Heritage Tree by the conditions described above however, in such a case, the Town will not bear any responsibilities beyond those required by the Vermont Tree Warden Statutes for trees on private property.

F. Tree Planting, Maintenance and Removal:

1. The following planting specifications will be followed:

a. **Species:** Only small species may be planted in the public right-of-way and on public property if the planting site is under or within 15 lateral feet of any overhead utility wires.

b. **Spacing and Distance:** Trees should be planted based on available green space and soil volume and taking into consideration canopy size. Limitations on planting may occur due to sight and utility issues.

c. **Tree Selection and Purchase:** Trees purchased for public tree planting must meet arboricultural standards for size, quality, health, potential for successful growth (region), and not be on an invasive list as defined by the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation or the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Council. The Town has the right to reject plant material that does not meet these standards and/or does not meet the required conditions of the zoning and planning boards.

2. The following practices will be adhered to for maintenance and removal of trees:

a. **Pruning and Tree Care:** All pruning and care of public trees must be completed in accordance with the latest version of the American National Standards Institute and in a manner consistent with current ISA (International Society of Arboriculture) Best Management Practices.

b. **Removal:** Any public tree scheduled for removal must have approval of the Tree Warden. Consideration must be given to replacing the existing public trees if in the event the tree must be removed.

c. **Removal of Stumps:** The removal of any stumps of public trees shall not be mandatory unless it is deemed necessary by the Town to allow for replanting or other reasons. The Town must find that the removal of the stump is necessary for other than just aesthetic reasons. Any landowner with property adjacent to a stump may petition the Town to allow for removal of said stump at the landowner’s expense.

G. Public Nuisances – Hazard Tree:

The following conditions are hereby declared a hazard tree:

1. Any tree or part thereof that is in a condition and location that jeopardizes public health, safety, or property. The standard for rating the level of risk of a tree will be the ISA Best Management Practices- Tree Risk Assessment for trees in urban areas.
2. Any tree or portion thereof that interferes with the flow of traffic or obstructs visibility on any public street, sidewalk, highway, alley or easement. The standards for rating the level of risk of a tree will be the VTrans Landscape Guide for Vermont Roadways & Transportation Facilities.

H. References that apply to Policy

The Town of Hartford Parks Ordinance and the Vermont Tree Warden Statutes are used as reference and any conflict in any part of this policy shall not invalidate the entire policy but revert to the underlying interpretations of over-riding ordinances or statutes.

Adopted by the Board of Selectmen Hartford, Vermont, September 30, 2003

Reviewed and up-dated by Hartford Tree Board, December 14, 2010

Draft Reviewed and up-dated by the Hartford Tree Board December 20, 2016

Edits and updates dated 12/22/2016 approved by Selectboard February 28, 2017