CITY OF GAINESVILLE
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

TREE REMOVAL PERMITS AND TREE PRUNING REGULATIONS SUMMARY – 10/01/06

Sec. 30-254 LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE: ARTICLE VIII

TREE REMOVAL COMPANIES: PLEASE PROTECT YOUR CUSTOMER! Mitigation of regulated trees removed without a permit is expensive. Gainesville ordinances require that trees removed without a permit be replaced on a diameter inch-for-inch basis with nursery grown trees 3" in caliper, 14' tall, Florida #1 costing approximately $225 each! Thus, a 30" diameter tree removed without a permit requires replanting of 10 trees-$2,250! The violation would be issued against the property owner, but if this happens to someone because you didn't get a permit, your professional reputation suffers. If you don't know whether a tree is regulated and requires a permit, please call the Nature Operations Division at 352-393-8171.

Trees in the following zoning categories are regulated more strictly than single-family:
--**commercial** (all businesses and offices),
--**government** (municipal and county buildings and parks),
--**multi-family housing,** including condominium associations triplex units, apartments, and
--**planned developments** (e.g. Rock Creek and some other subdivisions)
In the above zoning categories, a permit is required for any tree larger than 8" in diameter at 4.5' above ground level, except Slash and Loblolly Pines, which do not need a permit until they are bigger than 12" in diameter.

All trees planted in parking lots or adjacent to the street or in areas which might be part of the approved landscape plan require permits, even if they are smaller than 8" in diameter.

Dead trees must be replaced.

Detached single-family homes on individually owned lots in neighborhoods that were not constructed as "planned development" projects are regulated more leniently. In yards of homes built individually, the only trees regulated are those that meet the criteria of **Heritage trees**, and then only when they fall within the legal setbacks of the property. Definitions follow.

Heritage trees: All native trees species are Heritage trees when they are larger than 20" in diameter, except for Water Oaks, Laurel Oaks, Sweetgums, and Loblolly Pines, Which become Heritage trees at 30". If you are unsure of the species of tree, a sample Twig (with leaves) will be identified by the State of Florida Cooperative Extension Service at 2800 NE 39th Avenue, the Division of Plant Industry at 1911 SW 34th St., or the City of Gainesville Nature Operations Division at 405 NW 39th Ave.

Legal setbacks are the parts of a single family lot that must be the "yard." Example:
front: 25' behind the sidewalk,
side: 10' to 15' from the property edges on the sides, and
back: 25' from the rear lot line

Precise distances vary depending on the neighborhood. If the tree is close to the house and not inside the legal setback distances listed above, no permit is required. If you're uncertain about the legal setbacks, you can learn the exact measurements by calling the City Planning Division at 334-5000 x 5022.

***PENALTIES FOR TREE REMOVALS THAT REQUIRED A PERMIT…BUT NONE WAS OBTAINED* = <u>INCH-FOR-INCH REPLACEMENT</u> WITH TREES AT LEAST 14' TALL AND 3" IN TRUNK CALIPER (45-GAL CONTAINERS).**

***TREES REMOVED WITH PERMITS* CAN BE MITIGATED WITH TREES, 1.5" IN TRUNK CALIPER, NURSERY GROWN, FLORIDA GRADE #1 (15-GAL).**

<u>Replanting Requirement Details</u>:

Heritage Trees that are diseased or are causing damage to structures must be replaced with at least two trees, but more may be required on sites with few existing trees.

Each regulated tree that is <u>not</u> a Heritage tree must be replaced with two nursery-grown trees in 15-gal containers for every regulated tree removed. Replacement trees should be planted on the same property as the removals. If the site already has a good mix of high quality tree species of a variety of ages, arrangements may be approved to plant mitigation trees at another location within the City limits or to give the trees to the City for the tree-planting program.

Replacement tree species must grow as tall at maturity as the tree removed. You can not mitigate an Oak with two Dogwoods, Crape Myrtles, or Redbuds. Young trees to mitigate an oak would have to be two Winged Elms, Southern Magnolias, Bluff Oaks, White Ash, etc.

Mitigation trees must be planted within six months, and must survive (or be replanted).

Tree removal companies are advised to have property-owners sign the permits. Whomever signs is responsible for establishing the replacement trees!

<u>PRUNING REGULATIONS</u>: Sec. 30-265 (c)

All pruning must be done following the American National Standard for Tree Care Operations Tree, Shrub and Other Woody Plant Maintenance – Standard Practices, ANSI A-300 (available from the International Society of Arboriculture, P.O. Box GG, Savoy, IL 61874-9902). Trees may be pruned to maintain shape and promote their shade-giving qualities. Dead or diseased limbs and limbs that impede clearance (limbs within 7' of ground level) may be removed.

<u>The Code specifically prohibits</u>:

Topping regulated trees or trimming them into little round balls of foliage.

Excessive thinning of the tree crown.

Removing lower limbs higher than 7' above ground level on the trunk, unless this in necessary for the safe passage of large vehicles (fire or garbage trucks).

<u>Phone number to request applications for tree removal:</u> <u>334-2171</u>

An inspection will be made within five (5) working days and the results mailed or faxed to you. If you are on a tight timetable, every effort will be made to help, but immediate inspections (because you are on a site and have forgotten to get a permit) are not always possible, so please plan ahead.

<u>Pine Trees</u> In 1994-96 and 2000-2002, Gainesville was the site of Southern Pine Beetle epidemics. This is a particular kind of borer that kills trees and spreads quickly. The City Commission declared a "State of Emergency" in the urban forest and helped pay for removals. When the epidemic had passed, the program ended. At this time, the City provides no financial support to owners of private property who need to remove trees.