



City of Laguna Beach

Community Development
Department

INFORMATION GUIDE

HERITAGE TREES

DESIGNATION, REMOVAL, ALTERATION

Laguna Beach Municipal Code (LBMC) Chapter 12.08 establishes procedures to preserve distinctive trees in the city because of their size, age, historical significance, and/or special features. The chapter also establishes regulations for the preservation of heritage trees and encourages property owners to maintain and preserve the health and safety of heritage trees. Applications with the fee of \$420 can be submitted to the Department of Community Development. Designation and deletion/removal of trees as heritage trees are decided by the City Council at a noticed public hearing. A noticing list from an accredited noticing list agency must be provided to city staff upon request prior to the hearing. Fees for the noticing list shall be in addition to the application fee and paid directly to the noticing list agency.

How do I add my tree to the city's official Heritage Tree list?

A property owner can apply to the city to designate a tree on their property for placement on the city's official heritage tree list. The tree or trees shall have one of the following criteria in order to be eligible for placement on a heritage tree list: 1) Is of historical significance and is older than fifty years; 2) has distinctive characteristics of form, size or shape; 3) associated with a person or an event of community-wide significance; 4) remaining from an original native stand of California Live Oaks, Sycamores and Toyons; or 5) is scenically prominent from public view corridors.

What are my responsibilities as the property owner of a Heritage tree?

Each property owner is responsible for maintaining his/her heritage tree in a proper manner to sustain its health and distinctive qualities and prevent other adverse impacts to neighboring properties. Heritage trees shall be maintained consistent with the practices and policies described in the city's landscape and scenic highways resource document.

Are there any incentives as a Heritage tree owner?

Trees placed on the city's Heritage tree list may be eligible for reimbursement of public hearing noticing costs, waiver of planning, design review and building permit application fees or flexibility in the consideration of property setbacks.

How do I remove my heritage tree from the city's official list?

To remove and de-list a heritage tree from the city's official list, an application must be submitted to the city for consideration by the City Council at a noticed public hearing. Criteria to consider removal include the health of the tree, danger the tree may pose to the public health, safety or welfare, proximity of the tree to existing structures, any adverse impacts that removal of the tree would have on the topography, water retention or erosion or the effect removal would have on the established neighborhood landscape.

Do I need a permit to trim my heritage tree?

Trimming considered as normal annual maintenance of the tree does not require a permit from the city. Trimming greater than 25 percent of the canopy or trimming with removal of significant branches which substantially alters the natural form of the tree requires a permit from the Director of Community Development. Also, new construction within 15 feet of the trunk of a heritage tree requires a permit from the Director. Applications are submitted to the Director of Community Development, or his/her designee, for review. An arborist report is strongly recommended with the application to significantly alter a heritage tree.