

LINE CLEARANCE PRUNING AND REMOVAL POLICIES

The City of Shelby Utilities Department maintains the following policies regarding line clearance pruning and removals:

- Every effort will be made to contact and inform property owners regarding any line clearance pruning on their property before any pruning is done.
- Particular effort will be made to inform the property owner of the nature and scope of proposed line clearance pruning.
- Large-maturing trees should be trained to grow away from lines while they are young.
- Removal of large-maturing trees affecting or potentially affecting electric utility lines should be considered preferable to severely pruning such trees.
- Trees that have been severely pruned for line clearance may still be removed at the property owner's request.
- The practice of rounding over trees is inappropriate because of its detrimental effects on tree health and structure.
- Property owners should be encouraged to select and plant only small maturing trees near electric lines.

City of Shelby, North Carolina

P.O. BOX 207
SHELBY, NORTH CAROLINA 28151-0207
(704) 484-6840
FAX: (704) 484-6808

SMALL MATURING TREES



FOR CLEVELAND COUNTY

TREES AND ELECTRICAL LINES

Healthy trees provide our community with a comfortable “hometown” quality. Although it often goes unnoticed until interrupted, a reliable source of electricity also contributes to our community’s comfort and safety. A large percentage of the interruptions in electric power to our homes, schools, businesses, and hospitals are caused by trees.

To alleviate this problem while continuing to maintain healthy trees, property owners and utility operators must understand and cooperate on four basic principles:

- **Safety:** Safety hazards should be corrected as soon as possible by pruning or removal.
- **Pruning:** Pruning must be performed from time to time to keep trees from touching electric wires. The old practice of “rounding over” trees has been abandoned because it seriously damages trees. Proper pruning cuts are made at the branch collar, working with trees’ natural form and defense system.
- **Removal:** Sometimes it is better to remove a tree rather than continue to prune it severely. If a large tree must be removed it can often be replaced with a tree that will not grow into the lines.
- **Planting:** The types of trees planted near electric lines should be limited to those that will not interfere with the lines. Small-maturing trees fit the space and need little pruning to maintain clearance.

PRUNE OR REMOVE?

Large-maturing trees located beneath electric distribution lines will sooner or later present their owners with an unpleasant choice: allow the tree to be severely pruned or allow it to be removed. Often, property owners would prefer that their trees be left alone or “rounded-over”.

In reality, trees that interfere with electric lines cannot be left alone, and should not be rounded over, for these reasons:

- If any part of the tree touches an energized electric line it can become a safety hazard to people or pets that come in contact with it.
- When trees are rounded over their source of food (their leaves) is removed. Also, the injury inflicted by leaving branch stubs is very difficult for trees to overcome. Trees are forced to use large amounts of stored energy to produce new leaves and to deal with the injuries. This lowers their natural resistance to insects and diseases. Structural problems such as cracks, decay and weak limb attachments develop as a result.

In most situations trees can be pruned properly without greatly damaging the natural form of the tree. This is the best solution if the final appearance of the tree is acceptable to the property owner.

If some instances, however, proper pruning would be so severe that the tree would be disfigured. In such cases it is better to remove the tree and replace it with one that will not need pruning to keep it out of the lines.

PLANT SMALL TREES

Trees growing into electric lines cost electric utilities in the United States over a billion dollars each year to prune and remove. This cost, which is paid by consumers, could be significantly reduced if property owners refrained from planting large-maturing trees under power lines.

The City wants to make it easier for property owners to select the right tree for planting near electric utility lines. We’ve reviewed most of the trees that grow well in this area and developed a thorough list of small maturing trees. Trees selected from this list should not grow tall enough to require pruning for line clearance.

Our list is included inside this brochure – just unfold it for your reference. One word of explanation: at any given time some of the species listed may not be available locally. The reason is that the nursery industry produces what it can sell. Since trees take several years to reach marketable size, the nursery must try to predict what will be popular 3 to 5 years from the time of planting. Also, some of these species are native plants that have not historically been in demand. We have included them in the list because we feel it is important to include all small-maturing species that will thrive here.