



STOTFOLD TOWN COUNCIL TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

INDEX

	Topic	Page
1	Policy Statement	2
2	Council's Legal Responsibilities	2
3	Tree Risk Management	2
4	Tree Surveys	4
5	Natural Occurrences	6
6	Damage from Trees	8
7	Other tree related issues	9
8	Adjacent Landowners	10
9	Hedges	11
10	Project Management	11
11	Alternative formats	13
12	Appendix A - Tree Preservation Orders	14
13	Appendix B - Tree Inspection Matrix	15
14	Appendix C - Visual Tree Assessment	16

1. Policy statement

1.1. About this Policy

Stotfold Town Council has the following policy with regard to trees under their management: Trees are important landscape features that contribute to the character and appearance of Stotfold as well as improving the health and well-being of the people that live locally. Trees are integral to carbon sequestration and also provide valuable habitat for wildlife. To uphold our duty of care, we also have an obligation to protect people and property from hazardous trees so far as is reasonably practicable. This policy aims to accord with the 'Common Sense Risk of the management of trees' - guidance on trees and public safety in the UK for owners, managers and advisors - 2011 as published by the National Tree Safety Group (NTSG). [FCMS024.pdf \(ntsgroup.org.uk\)](#)

1.2. Town Council Duty

The Town Council has a duty to inspect these trees and ensure it meets all legal obligations which include maintaining public safety knowing the location and condition of the trees for which it is responsible.

1.3. Arboricultural Health

The fundamental principle of public tree management is to maintain a tree population that is safe, healthy and diverse in terms of species and age.

2. Council's legal responsibilities

2.1 Duty

As the owner and manager of trees, Stotfold Town Council has a legal duty of care to take all reasonable steps to ensure that any foreseeable hazards can be identified and made safe. This duty is laid down in the Occupiers Liability Act 1984 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 Section 3.

2.2 Governance

Breaches of this duty may give rise to a claim of negligence. It is not possible to eliminate all risks from trees however there are often indications that a tree may be in decline. The council will carry out regular inspections to identify foreseeable hazards and specify the works needed to reduce these risks to an acceptable level.

3. Tree Risk Management

3.1 The Fundamental Approach

In order to keep tree risk management work proportionate to the level of risk that trees represent the tree survey methodology has been designed so that most resources are directed to areas where there is potentially most risk to people and property. In order to do this the land is periodically surveyed by a qualified arboricultural consultant using the Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) methodology at appendix C. If any risks are observed, they are assessed using a standard methodology called Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA)

The arboricultural consultant will specify management works if their assessment finds that a tree represents a significant risk of harm to people or property.

Stotfold Town Council will then arrange for these management works to be carried out within an appropriate time-frame. Stotfold Town Council's programme of tree risk management inspections is undertaken by an independent and professional arboriculturist. The survey records information on council owned trees and identifies any which pose a risk to health and safety. Remedial action is undertaken on any tree which pose a risk on a timescale recommended by inspectors.

3.2 Target Zoning

With knowledge of site use different areas can be categorised into target zones according to their level of use. The system of categorisation that has been used for zoning the area is detailed in Table 1. A Zone Plan (ZP-1) has been drawn to indicate the three areas of zoning, the plan is provided at the rear of the document. The plan will be used to dictate which areas are included in annual tree surveys as explained in section 2.3 (but this may be refined by further judgement during the tree survey).

Table 1: The system used for target zoning at the site.

Targeted Zone	Map Colour	Description	Frequency
High risk (Zone 1)	Red	Areas of high use where veteran/mature trees are in falling distance of roads, footpaths, car parks and play areas.	Every 2 Years

Medium risk (Zone 2)	Blue	Area of medium use pedestrian and vehicle use including estate roads and green spaces, allotments, major woodland paths,	Every 4 Years
Low-Medium risk (Zone 3)	Green	Areas of low use away. Areas where only young/early mature/regularly pollarded trees are located.	Every 6 years

3.3 Frequency and type of inspection.

The land managed by Stotfold Town Council is extensive and it would be excessive to carry out a survey of every tree each year. Therefore, in order to concentrate attention where it is most required, the land has been divided into three risk zones. Trees in Zone 1 will be surveyed every 2 years, trees in Zone 2 will be surveyed every 4 years, and trees in zone 3 every 6 years. These time intervals are detailed in Appendix B. But it should be noted that there may be situations when there is concern for a tree that is in Zone 2 or 3 and may recommend it for a more regular inspection than the other trees in that zone.

4. Tree Surveys

4.1 The Survey Approach

The tree survey will include every tree in the relevant zone, but trees forming cohesive arboricultural features (visually, culturally or aerodynamically) will be assessed as a group where appropriate. During the survey each individual tree surveyed will be tagged and its location added to the tree plan.

A condition assessment will be carried out and recorded for each tree that is tagged. The data should include the date when the survey was made, the name of the tree surveyor, the tag number, the species of tree, a simple assessment of the height of the tree, its age class, its physiological condition, notes on its structural condition and any relevant site features. If the surveyor does decide to survey a tree from a group, that tree will be tagged and its location added to the tree plan.

When carrying out repeat tree surveys each of the trees that have been tagged in previous years must be given an individual tree assessment. Any trees of safety concern will be surveyed using a simple version of the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) methodology³. QTRA applies established and accepted risk management principles to tree safety management. The outcome of the QTRA assessment is a score and this value can be used to prioritise management works. If the tree is assessed to have a significant risk of harm, then appropriate management recommendations should be prescribed.

Appropriate management will fall into three broad categories:

1. The risk is assessed as low and so no works are required;
2. Management works are prescribed;
3. A visual assessment is inconclusive and further investigation is required.

Further investigation would be appropriate if:

1. The tree is high value such as for amenity or wildlife, and you believe that it cannot be made safe without significantly reducing its value;
2. The symptoms are inconclusive, e.g. the extent of trunk decay is unclear;
3. Investigation of the hazard requires specialist knowledge and experience;

4. An aerial inspection of a tree is advised following a visual assessment from the ground.

4.2 **Prioritising recommended works**

The risk assessments will produce a probability of harm (within the next year), and these figures will be used to prioritise recommended tree works. The system used is based on the quantified tree risk assessment (QTRA) and the tolerability of risk framework and detailed in Table 2. Accordingly, tree risk management works that are identified to have a risk of harm greater than 1/100 will be treated immediately and without any delay, and trees calculated to have a risk score between 1/100 and 1 in 10,000 will be carried out as soon as reasonably practicable, but in any event in no more than 8 weeks. Risks that are between 1 in 10,000 and 1 in 1,000,000 will be programmed into annual works schedules.

There will be standard tree maintenance works appropriate for some trees such as the lifting of low crowns or the removal of ivy or epicormic growth. These works will be specified as part of the tree survey as 'advisory' works. During tree risk assessments features within the falling distance of the tree (targets) can be people, property or road traffic. When considering the risks posed by the tree the inspection considered the usage of the target zone, the size of the part that could impact the target, and the likelihood of that part failing.

Table 2: The system for prioritising recommended tree work

Level of Risk	Probability of Harm	Work Priority	Timescale
Very High	1 – 1/1000	Urgent	Immediately, without delay
High	1/1000 – 1/10,000	High	As soon as reasonably practicable
Moderate	1/10,000 – 1/1,000,000	Non-urgent	In order of priority and funds permitting
Acceptable	<1/1,000,000	N/A	N/A
None	-	Advisory	N/A

4.3 **Use of appropriate contractors**

Tree work is inherently dangerous and so only experienced contractors/arborists will be used. All staff must be suitably trained, certificated and insured for the necessary operations. Tree work good practice is set out in British Standard BS3998:2010 - Recommendations for Tree Work

4.4 **Nature conservation and tree works**

Any arborist working at the site must comply with all statutory requirements concerning flora, fauna and habitat in accordance with relevant nature conservation legislation. The arborist should make sure that they are familiar with current best working practices to minimize disturbance to flora and fauna. The arborist must consider the risk of impacting protected species prior to carrying out arboricultural works, especially when dealing with trees that have veteran characteristics. Natural England must be notified if there is reason to believe that arboricultural operations may disturb bats because a licence for the works may be required.

If nesting birds are found to be present then the tree work must not commence, or if the tree surgery has already started and nesting birds are then discovered then the work must stop immediately and be re-scheduled for later in the year.

The responsibility for protecting wildlife will be held by the contractor but Stotfold Town Council accepts that this is a necessary constraint to tree works. Stotfold Town Council also understands that the need to protect wildlife may result in some works being delayed, and this requirement may also result in increased costs for tree management.

4.5 **Tree Protection Orders**

Tree Protection Order/Tree Conservation Area: Tree Protection Orders (TPO's) are administered by the Local Planning Authority, Central Bedfordshire Council, and are made to protect trees that bring significant amenity benefit to the local area. All types of trees, but not hedges, bushes or shrubs can be protected, and a TPO can protect anything from a single tree to all trees within a defined area or woodland. Any species can be protected, but no species is automatically protected by a tree preservation order.

A TPO is a written order, which in general, makes it a criminal offence to cut down, top, lop, uproot, wilfully damage or wilfully destroy a tree protected by that order, or to cause or permit such actions, without the authority's permission. Trees not protected by a TPO may be in a tree conservation area. Stotfold Town Council must give written notice to Central Bedfordshire Council of any proposed work, describing what we want to do, at least six weeks before the work starts.

This is called a 'section 211 notice' and it gives Central Bedfordshire Council an opportunity to consider protecting the tree with a TPO. Stotfold Town Council does not need to give notice of work on a tree in a conservation area less than 7.5 centimetres in diameter, measured 1.5 metres above the ground (or 10 centimetres if thinning to help the growth of other trees).

5. **Natural occurrences**

5.1 **Tree litter**

The council is not legally responsible for fallen leaves, seeds, fruit, pollen, blossom or cones onto private property or any damage that this may cause. Pruning does not alleviate these problems and we would not carry out works to prevent these arisings.

Where gutters are regularly blocked by fallen leaves gutter guards may be fitted to provide a low maintenance solution at the property owner's expense.

5.2 **Wildlife**

The council does not accept responsibility for cleaning up of animal or insect droppings such as bird droppings and aphid honeydew onto private property.

5.3 **Pests and diseases**

The council will take a responsible approach towards pests and disease and will be proactive in planning for any new threats that are posed to the council's tree population.

5.4 **Shade**

There is no legal right to light therefore the council has no legal obligation to abate this nuisance. Pruning will often have negligible impact on the amount of light reaching a house and can have the adverse effect of accelerating additional growth. Therefore, under normal circumstances tree works is not considered. We will not prune or fell a tree in our ownership to improve natural light to a solar panel as trees are an important asset in tackling climate change.

5.5 **Bird nesting**

All wild birds at the nest are protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. It is an offence to intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild birds whilst it is in use or being built. It is also an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bird listed on Schedule 1 while it is nesting, or at a nest containing eggs or young, or disturb the dependent young of such birds.

The council carries out tree, hedge and shrub removals or substantial renovations outside of the nesting period where possible (Sept to March); exceptions will include works undertaken for health and safety reasons and trees proven to be damaging property.

At times formally grown shrubs and hedges require containment pruning within the nesting season to remove the current season's growth. The works will be carried out in a manner causing minimum disturbance to birds and wildlife.

Where works are required within the nesting season a preliminary inspection will be undertaken to check for the presence of protected species. Should a protected species be present or in the area surrounding, including active bird nests (one being built, in use or containing eggs), works will not be undertaken unless to alleviate a dangerous condition in which case advice is sought from the RSPB.

5.6 **Bat roosts**

Bats are a European Protected Species and are protected by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Causing damage to or destroying a roost site is a criminal offence which can lead to imprisonment or fine. Trees with suitable features such as holes, cracks, crevices and dense ivy will be risk assessed for their ability to support bats. Trees in Stotfold Town Council ownership displaying signs of roosting bats will be referred to an external bat consultant before any work commences. Any trees supporting roosting bats will not be worked on until Natural England is consulted.

6. **Damage from trees**

6.1 **Root ingress in gardens**

- 6.1.1 The council is unable to prevent root ingress within adjacent gardens, it is not considered actionable nuisance and therefore we do not undertake root removal where this has occurred. Reduction or removal of some tree species which regenerate through shoots from their buried roots can often exacerbate the problem as it stimulates them to produce more roots.
- 6.1.2 The council will not accept responsibility for tree roots that have gained access to drains or services as a consequence of these services being unfit for purpose. Tree roots do not generally break drainage pipes but may be attracted by the moisture of a leaking pipe and enter. The onus is on the owner to get the drain repaired at their own expense.
- 6.1.3 Where tree roots have caused minor damage to non-supporting structures such as garden walls the council will not take any action. It is the responsibility of the property owner to rebuild or repair garden walls and fences to take account of adjacent trees. This can be achieved in a number of ways (for example, installing a section of railing or bridging foundations around the base of a tree).
- 6.1.4 If a damaged wall or fence was constructed after planting of the tree, it may mean that the design or construction has failed to take the presence of nearby trees into account.
- 6.1.5 The council will not accept responsibility for tree roots damaging hard paving on adjacent land. The onus is on the owner to repair paths, drives and patios, etc, to take account of adjacent trees and tree roots.

6.2 **Damage from overhanging branches**

- 6.2.1 The council will cut back tree branches from a dwellinghouse and garage where they touch windows, walls, roofs or gutters. This will ensure that damage to a dwellinghouse and garage such as tiles or gutters is avoided. We endeavour to maintain a 1.5m clearance from these structures.

- 6.2.2 Overhanging branches not causing damage to a dwellinghouse, garage, fence or wall will not be pruned back, and it is the onus of the property owner to cut them back to their boundary if they perceive these to be a nuisance.
- 6.2.3 If branches from a tree on council owned land is found to be causing damage to a boundary wall we will investigate and take action if appropriate. The usual course would be to remove low branches up to a maximum height of 3m.
- 6.2.4 We will consider tree removal if the walls or fence is irreplaceable and of exceptional importance, e.g. a retaining wall or of historical interest, if there is a risk to public health or if other tree works are not appropriate.

6.3 Damage to paths and patios

- 6.3.1 It is often possible to repair paths to take account of adjacent trees and tree roots. Where roots protrude, they can be root pruned up to the boundary, or the path re-laid around the tree with flexible materials such as asphalt to provide a smooth surface. Where trees are considered to be causing damage to paths or footpaths, we will not normally consider tree removal except where there is a risk to public health which cannot otherwise be mitigated.

6.4 Subsidence

- 6.4.1 The council will rigorously identify and defend any claims which are presumed to be false.

7. Other tree related issues

7.1 Telephone wires

- 7.1.1 We will not prune or fell a tree in our ownership to prevent or reduce interference with telephone wires. We would recommend contacting the telephone service provider in such circumstances.
- 7.1.2 It is the telephone service providers' responsibility to maintain your service. Several options are available to the utility company that do not require pruning of a tree to maintain the service. Often pruning is a temporary solution and the problem may reoccur when branches grow back.
- 7.1.3 For example, the cable can be sheathed at points of high friction; the lines can also be redirected through the tree canopy. It may be that the telephone service provider is able to suggest an alternative solution to the problem of trees affecting telephone wires.

8. Adjacent Landowners

8.1 Permitted works to council owned trees

- 8.1.1 Property owners have a common law right to make private arrangements to prune back council owned tree branches overhanging their property, as long as the tree is not subject to a Tree Preservation Order, within a Conservation Area or have any planning restrictions attached to them.
- 8.1.2 The cutting back should only be up to the fence or boundary line. Should works be required beyond the boundary line in order to cut back to suitable pruning points, approval must be sought from the council. The Town Council will need to meet the contractor to agree the works, see proof of insurance, qualifications, professional membership and site risk assessment before they are allowed to carry out work on council owned land.
- 8.1.3 Cuttings must be disposed of in an appropriate manner – the council does not require these to be returned. Any cuttings left on council owned property will be deemed as fly tipping and will be subject to appropriate enforcement action.

8.1.4 Any works undertaken to council owned trees must be carried out to the relevant industry standards as set out in BS 3998. It is recommended that works are undertaken by a suitably trained professional tree surgeon carrying the relevant levels of Public Liability Insurance unless the works are such that you could carry them out with hand secateurs or similar. The person undertaking these works would be liable for any works which injury/damage or result in the death of the tree as a result of poor practices.

8.2 Criminal damage

8.2.1 Any felling or heavy pruning of council trees on council land is deemed as criminal damage. The perpetrator will be investigated and under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing act 2014 a Community Protection Notice may be issued, breach of which would result in a fine of up to £2,500 for an individual and £20,000 for a body.

9. Hedges

9.1 Hedges on council land

9.1.1 Hedges will be retained on council land wherever possible, managed in a healthy condition in the interest of local amenity and wildlife.

9.2 High hedges

9.2.1 If natural light is being blocked by growth of a hedge, then action may be taken to reduce the problem under the High Hedges Act Part 8 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003. Central Bedfordshire Council is the authority who have the power to intervene in matters involving high hedge disputes.

10. Project Management

10.1 Management responsibilities

The Public Realm Officer is responsible for maintaining records and ensuring that tree surveys are carried out at the right time. It is also the Public Realm Officers responsibility to communicate the tree risk management policy to the Town Rangers.

The Public Realm Officer will be responsible for ensuring that the necessary tree management works are carried out. The Public Realm Officer must also make sure that a professional arboriculturist is consulted for any tree related hazards that have been reported by members of staff or the public (if a check reveals that the defects are outside of the knowledge or experience of grounds management staff).

Following the tree survey any trees that are considered to have a very high risk of harm will require immediate arboricultural works. The Public Realm Officer must ensure that there are systems in place to ensure that these works are carried out as soon as possible. High priority tree works must be carried out as soon as reasonably practicable, but in any event within 8 weeks. Remaining works will be addressed in order of priority and as funds allow.

10.2 Tree Planting and Young Tree Maintenance:

From time-to-time trees have to be felled. However, these trees need to be replaced or the tree population will continue to decline. Replanting trees is essential to maintain and help the urban tree population grow.

It is important to ensure that for every tree felled, at least one tree is planted and is properly cared for. The size, scale and location of replacement planting should reflect both the trees removed and the situation.

It's the Council's aim to replant in the same area where a tree has been removed however, sometimes this may not be possible, either through lack of support from residents or due to the circumstances of the site for instance, nearby drains, powerlines, services or a general

lack of space for a tree to thrive. In this instance, a tree will be planted as close to the site as possible on Council owned/controlled land in a suitable location.

Trees in urban areas are usually present either because a conscious decision was made to plant them or because they self-seeded in parks and gardens and were allowed to grow and mature.

10.3 Objectives of Tree Planting:

Retention: Ensuring the retention, wherever practicable or desirable, of trees on Council land.

Enhancement: To increase the tree cover and species diversity in those areas of the Town that are lacking in trees

Continuous Tree Cover: To undertake the management of the existing stock ensuring that there is a continuous programme of tree replacement throughout the Town, ensuring that there is a mixed range of age and species.

Species Selection: Planting, where appropriate, large indigenous or exotic species to create skyline features.

Lowering pollution levels: Selecting trees and hedging plants suitable for absorbing carbon dioxide and air pollutants across the Town.

Conservation: Encourage nature conservation through tree planting so that across the Town there is a measurable increase in the conditions suitable for wildlife to colonise areas where before it had limited foothold opportunities.

Publicity and Promotion: Increase the level of public awareness of the tree resource by encouraging public involvement in decision making and planting schemes.

Sponsorship: To encourage members of the public, businesses and other groups to sponsor trees via the introduction of a Tree Donation Scheme.

10.4 Monitoring Tree Contractors:

The Council will regularly monitor contractors to ensure standards of work and health and safety are being maintained. An annual review of all Contractors will take place to ensure that they have adequate insurance in place, standards of health and safety have been achieved and that staff are adequately trained for the work in which they are engaged.

All contractors are required to comply with the following, when working on the public highway:

- New Roads and Street Works Act 1991
- Street Works and Road Works Code of Practice

10.5 Maintaining records:

Records must be kept for the following:

1. Annual tree reports including details of when the survey was carried out, who surveyed the trees, and notes on tree condition;
2. A prioritised list of recommended management works;
3. A record of risk management operations undertaken including all contractor related documentation such as contracts, invoices, conservation area consents etc;

4. Records of all other reported faults from staff or members of the public;
5. Records of any other remedial actions and follow on observations;
6. A record of existing Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) with map **add**;
7. All records will be kept for a minimum of 5 years in case a claim is made against the Stotfold Town Council. This is to ensure that there is a clear evidence trail that can be referred to following an incident.

11. Alternative formats

- 11.1 Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.
- 11.2 Copies of this document in large print (A3 format) or larger font size, or any tables contained within this document in a screen reader accessible format can be made available on request from the council office or by telephoning 01462 730064 or by emailing the Clerk's office enquiries@stotfoldtowncouncil.gov.uk.

This Policy was amended for consideration by the Public Realm Committee **25th June 2024** and will be reviewed in one year or as required.

Appendix A

Tree Preservation Orders in Stotfold

Preservation Number	Location	Date Issued	Details
	Brook Street/Coppice Mead	1968	1 Chesnut, 1 Lime
1961	The Bury	1962	Many
?	Astwick Road	1966	Silver Birch
1	The Crofts	1971	Chesnut
2	Rook Tree Lane	1971	
4	Murrell Lane/High Street	1971	
6	High Street	1973	Ash
?	St Olives, Hitchin Road	1975	
5	The Gardens	1978	Sycamore
7	Regent Street	1978	
5	The Mixies	1989	
6	Queen Street	1989	Yew x 2
12	The Avenue	1996	
4	Heron Way	1998	
12	Queen Street	1998	Sycamore
1	Fairfield Hospital	1999	Many
2	71 & 73 The Green	02/05/00	Chestnut
3	Malthouse Lane	02/05/00	Chesnuts in fields
5	Walnut Close	02/05/00	Lime
6	The Old Vicarage	02/05/00	Beech
9	65 The Green	31/03/00	Yew
10	St Mary's Church Hall	03/04/00	Chesnut
11	High Street	19/05/00	Limes, Chesnut
12	2 trees, 90 & 92 High Street	12/05/00	Maple, Chesnut
To be verified against the Central Bedfordshire TPO Register			

Appendix B - Tree Inspection Matrix

Tree Risk Zone	Informal Inspection Frequency	Formal Inspection Frequency	Detailed Inspection Frequency
High	Weekly	2 years	As required
Medium	Monthly	4 years	As required
Low	Quarterly	6 years	As required
	<p>Informal observations of trees contribute to wider management and tree safety. They are essentially those day-to-day observations of trees made by employees who have a good local knowledge of the trees and location and see them during the course of their working day.</p> <p>May be undertaken by: People with good local knowledge and familiarity with local trees who are not tree specialists, but rather those closely associated with a site, such as the parks team, who understands the way the site is used (areas most and least frequented) and the extent of the danger, should a tree be found that is clearly failing Reports of problems by staff or members of the public are a fundamental part of our risk management process.</p>	<p>Formal inspection of a tree is when a specific visit to a tree or group of trees is made with the sole purpose of performing an inspection that is not incidental to other activities. From Stotfold Town Council's perspective the formal inspection process would assess the overall condition of the tree's it provides a useful, cost-effective means of inspecting our tree stock which is an important means of identifying when further action is needed, including tree surgery or further detailed inspection.</p> <p>May be undertaken by: People who have a good general knowledge of trees and the ability to recognise normal and abnormal appearance and growth for the locality. This includes an ability to recognise obviously visible signs of serious ill health or significant structural problems were tree failure, could result in serious harm. They also need to know when to request a detailed inspection.</p>	<p>Detailed inspection of a tree should be applied for individual, high-value trees giving high-priority concern in well-used zones. The detailed inspection is normally prioritised according to the level of safety concern. Detailed inspections are therefore reserved for trees valued for their heritage, amenity or habitat and which are suspected of posing a high level of risk, as already identified through a previous formal or informal assessment.</p> <p>May be undertaken by: An appropriately competent person, experienced in the field of arboricultural investigation. The inspector must be suitably qualified and experienced and carry appropriate professional indemnity and public liability insurance.</p>

Appendix C - Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) Methodology

The partial stages of the VTA-method

1. Symptom detection

Body language of trees
Growth defects
Appearance of the bark
Crown and leaves
Fungal fruiting bodies and their body language
Local environment of the tree

2. Confirmation of defects and measurement

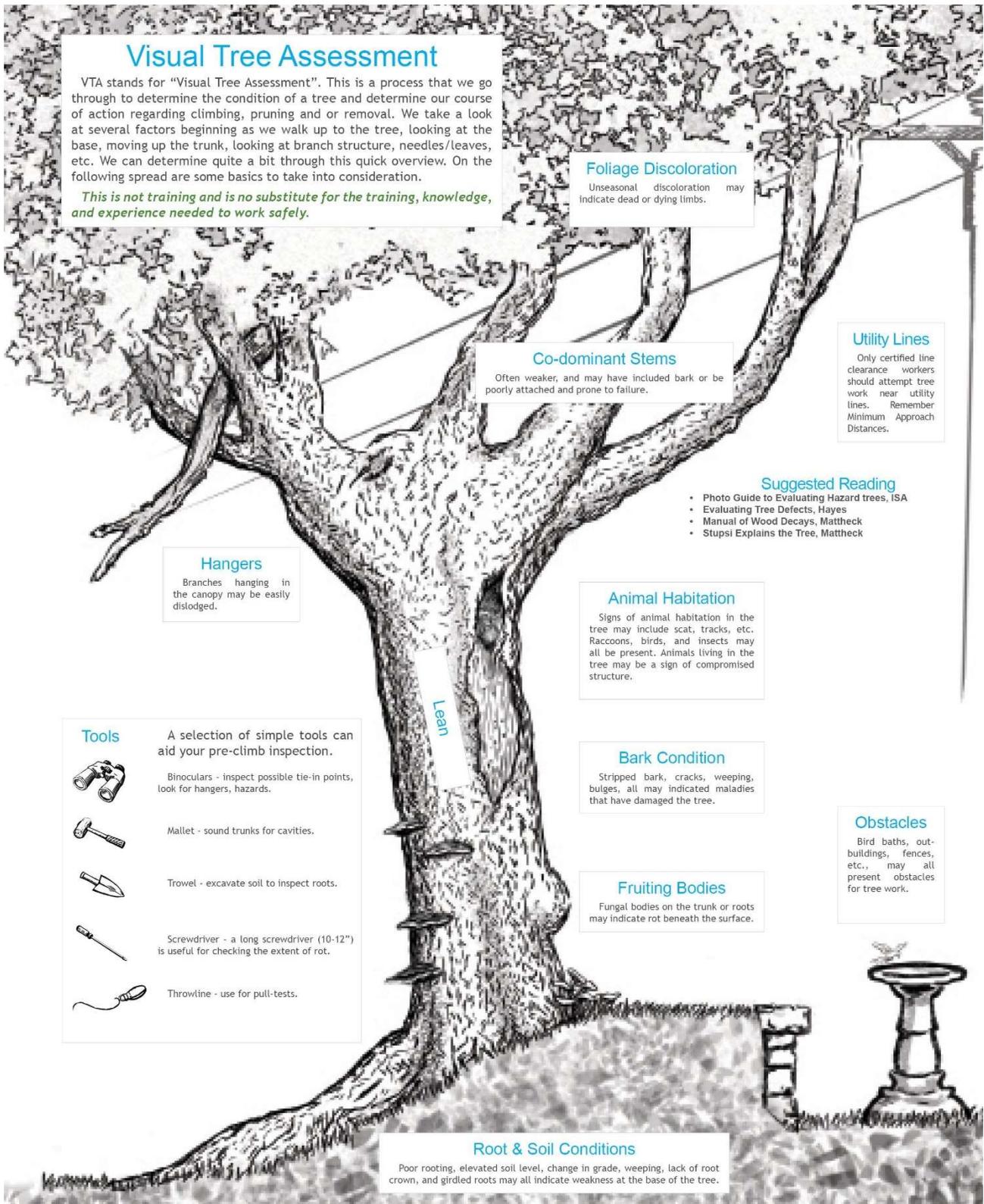
Drilling Resistance Measurement (IML-RESI Systems)
Sound velocity measurement (IML Micro Hammer)
Measurement of the wood strength (Fractometer)
Annual ring analysis (IML Measuring Table)

3. Assessment of the defect

Criteria of failure for hollow or decayed trees
Criteria of failure for root damages
Criteria of failure for trees that are healthy but high trees (H/D ratio!)

4. Determination of further actions

Pruning
Mechanical aid (crow securing system, stilts,...)
Replacement of the tree



Visual Tree Assessment

VTA stands for "Visual Tree Assessment". This is a process that we go through to determine the condition of a tree and determine our course of action regarding climbing, pruning and or removal. We take a look at several factors beginning as we walk up to the tree, looking at the base, moving up the trunk, looking at branch structure, needles/leaves, etc. We can determine quite a bit through this quick overview. On the following spread are some basics to take into consideration.

This is not training and is no substitute for the training, knowledge, and experience needed to work safely.

Foliage Discoloration

Unseasonal discoloration may indicate dead or dying limbs.

Co-dominant Stems

Often weaker, and may have included bark or be poorly attached and prone to failure.

Utility Lines

Only certified line clearance workers should attempt tree work near utility lines. Remember Minimum Approach Distances.

Suggested Reading

- Photo Guide to Evaluating Hazard trees, ISA
- Evaluating Tree Defects, Hayes
- Manual of Wood Decays, Mattheck
- Stupsi Explains the Tree, Mattheck

Hangers

Branches hanging in the canopy may be easily dislodged.

Animal Habitation

Signs of animal habitation in the tree may include scat, tracks, etc. Raccoons, birds, and insects may all be present. Animals living in the tree may be a sign of compromised structure.

Tools

A selection of simple tools can aid your pre-climb inspection.



Binoculars - inspect possible tie-in points, look for hangers, hazards.



Mallet - sound trunks for cavities.



Trowel - excavate soil to inspect roots.



Screwdriver - a long screwdriver (10-12") is useful for checking the extent of rot.



Throwline - use for pull-tests.

Lean

Bark Condition

Stripped bark, cracks, weeping, bulges, all may indicated maladies that have damaged the tree.

Fruiting Bodies

Fungal bodies on the trunk or roots may indicate rot beneath the surface.

Obstacles

Bird baths, out-buildings, fences, etc., may all present obstacles for tree work.

Root & Soil Conditions

Poor rooting, elevated soil level, change in grade, weeping, lack of root crown, and girdled roots may all indicate weakness at the base of the tree.