

FAQs FOR TREES IN RESOURCE PROTECTION AREAS

Where can I learn more about tree removal requirements on my property? Please check this [link](#) for information about Arlington County tree removal requirements.

Arlington County has special protection for trees that are located in the Resource Protection Areas (RPA), historic districts and trees that are designated as [specimen](#), heritage or memorial trees.

What is an RPA area and how can I find out if my property is in RPA?

RPAs in Arlington County include streams, wetlands, and the area of land adjacent to these waters (riparian buffer). These buffers extend at least 100 feet from streams and wetlands, but can be wider where there are “critical slopes” (slopes steeper than 25%, or 45 degrees).

Protecting trees in these areas helps keep our streams healthier and prevents major erosion on the stream banks. Check this link to find out if your property is in the RPA: <https://gis.arlingtonva.us/Html5Viewer/Index.html?viewer=ACMaps.HTML5>

Can I remove trees that are damaged, diseased, dying, or dead, within the RPA?

If trees are damaged, diseased, dying or dead, they can be removed at the owner’s discretion, but the property owner should have an arborist document the condition of the tree prior to removal. The written statement from an arborist will serve as a condition assessment record should there be any subsequent questions about the removal.

Can I remove healthy trees from my property if it is in the RPA?

Approval from Arlington County is required for the removal of mature, healthy trees with a diameter of 3 inches or greater in the RPA. A request for tree removal must be submitted by email to rpareview@arlingtonva.us with information on the number, size and species of trees, and reason for removal, along with a proposed planting locations for replacement of the tree being removed. A condition assessment from a Mid-Atlantic Chapter – International Society of Arboriculture (MAC-ISA) certified arborist should be included in the removal request. For resources on finding an arborist visit <https://goodtreecare.com>

How should trees be removed?

Trees should be topped at 15-20’ in height to retain some wildlife benefit. The rootball of the tree should remain in place to continue to stabilize the soil.

What is the time/cost for reviews for tree removal request or landscaping work?

Tree removal requests that are not part of larger building projects can be reviewed within 5 days after an email submission. Projects disturbing less than 2500 square feet of land do not pay a fee for the RPA review. There is a fee for the RPA review if it is part of a building permitting process. The fee varies depending on the size of the proposed project. The RPA review for a larger project generally occurs concurrently with other required permit reviews.

Can I trim shrubs and prune trees within the RPA?

It is required that residents seek the advice of an [MAC-ISA certified arborist](#) prior to pruning trees and shrubs in the RPA. Pruning to protect the health of the tree requires documentation from a MAC-ISA certified arborist. Pruning to remove otherwise healthy growth for sight lines, or to open up the canopy to increase sun on your property, requires review by Arlington County. However, pruning to remove dead branches or other potential hazards can be undertaken without review.

What do I have to include with a Tree Removal request?

If you are proposing to remove trees that are not part of another project, a tree removal request can be submitted to Arlington County by email at rpareview@arlingtonva.us. If the tree removal is part of a buildign project, a [Water Quality Impact Assessment Form](#) must be submitted.

If the request is for tree removal only, the applicant needs to submit a plan or a plat with the location of the tree, type of tree, tree condition, and RPA boundary line. A risk assessment report from an arborist is required and a photo is also preferred.

Do I have to plant replacement trees after removal?

To mitigate for tree removal, tree replacement is required unless the tree is dead, diseased or damaged. The tree must be ¾-1-inch caliper or greater. Tree replacement planting must be in [accordance with Arlington County Tree Replacement Requirements](#).

What species can I plant in RPA?

All plantings within the RPA should be native species. See **Plant NOVA Natives** for ideas at <https://www.plantnovanatives.org/> .

<https://environment.arlingtonva.us/stormwater-watersheds/stormwater-at-home/conservation-landscapes>

Does the County have Tree Planting Programs?

Yes. Please visit <https://environment.arlingtonva.us/trees/plant-trees/tree-planting-programs/>

[If you have further questions, please email rpareview@arlingtonva.us](mailto:rpareview@arlingtonva.us)