

Best Practices to Protect Elms and Significant Streetscape Trees During Construction and Landscaping

Castine Tree Committee, Castine Tree Warden and Castine Arborist

The following guidelines relate to construction projects, including landscaping and hardscaping.

Requirements of the Castine Tree Ordinance

- *Property owners should direct any request to cut down any elm tree located in the public tree area [35 feet from the center of the street], or any elm tree that is 10 inches or more in diameter at 4 ½ feet high, which is located anywhere within the town, or any significant streetscape tree, to the Elm Tree Committee or to the Tree Warden, in order to secure prior written approval. If you have any question about whether a tree is protected, ask before you take it down.*
- *Any elm tree in the public tree area [35 feet from the center of the street] or any significant streetscape tree shall not have any of its major roots disturbed nor shall it be substantially pruned, without the prior written approval of the Tree Warden. When in doubt, ask first.*

Recommended Best Practices for Avoiding Tree Damage - Guidance for Construction, Landscaping, and Hardscaping

- * **Seek the advice of our town arborist** to go over construction plans beforehand to evaluate situations of particular vulnerability to a tree's roots.
- * **Work as far away from the trunk of a tree as possible.** A safe distance is beyond the drip lines (the outer canopy of the tree).
- * **Within the drip lines, avoid cutting roots as much as possible,** especially the larger support roots. Also, **avoid landscaping work** that involves digging into roots near the trunk of a tree. **Reminder:** Advance permission is required for cutting any major roots of some protected elms and streetscape trees, see Ordinance provision above.
- * Where roots unavoidably need to be cut, **the fewer cuts the better,** and the cuts should be made cleanly with a sharp pruning tool, such as a root saw. **The roots should not be cut by construction equipment**—no ripping and tearing. **Supervision by an arborist is highly recommended.**

- * As much as possible, **avoid soil compaction under tree canopy**. Do not place heavy equipment or heavy materials on tree roots. Avoid hardscaping near trunks, which impacts air and water supply to roots.
- * **Do not add soil on top of roots or change the grade**, which can smother mature roots.
- * **Fence around tree trunks before construction begins** to protect trunks from damage, suggested distance of 8 feet or more.
- * **Have best practices written into your construction specifications** and have inspections of the work areas by property owners, caretakers, the tree warden or tree committee members and where appropriate, an arborist. Use good communication with your contractors.

Recommendations for Tree Care After Construction

Stressed trees are more prone to disease, including Dutch Elm Disease. We offer the following recommendations as needed for post-construction care:

- * **Fertilize.** Long term fertilization is recommended with attention to root stimulants. 1/2 dose may be sufficient: Seek the advice of our town arborist.
- * **Watering.** 1 inch of water on the root system per week during times of insufficient rainfall.
- * **Monitoring.** Watch closely for changes and convey information to the tree warden.
- * **And avoid** placing, shoveling or plowing contaminants such as salt, winter ice treatments or other chemicals near soil over tree roots.

Recommendation for Planting Trees

Consider planting new trees as part of your plans. Consult with the Tree Committee for recommendations of species that are compatible with the existing historic canopy and with local conditions. Sourcing of trees is critical. The Tree Committee has a list of reputable suppliers.

For further information, consult Castine's Elm Tree Ordinance, the Tree Warden, the Town Arborist, the Tree Committee, or the Town Manager through Town Hall (207-326-4502; townoffice@castine.me.us).

April 8, 2022