

Published January 20th, 2010

Rules for Protected Trees Slightly Amended

By Cathy Tyson

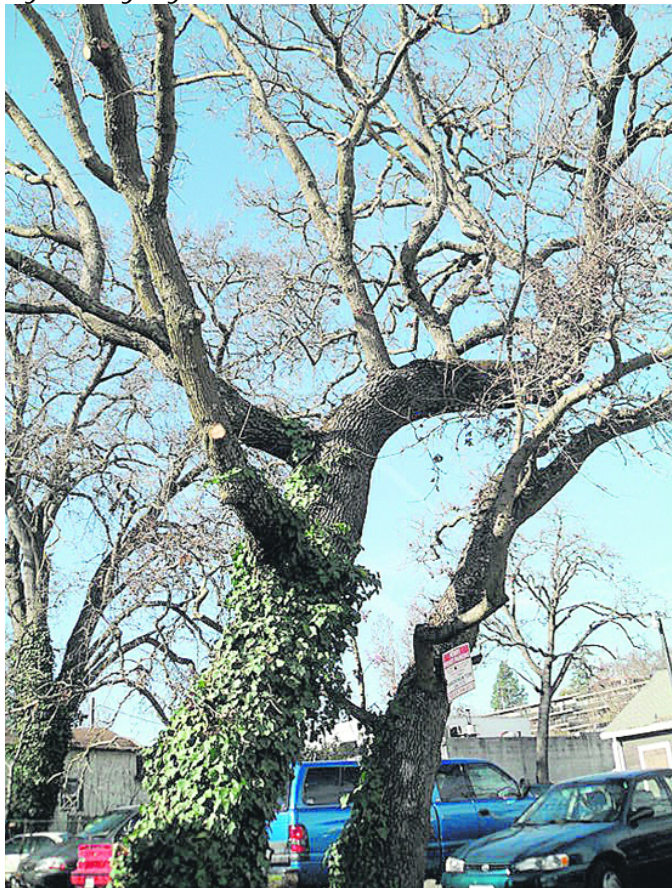


Photo Cathy Tyson

"I speak for the trees," is something Dr. Seuss's "The Lorax" might say, but in this case it's the language of the Lafayette Municipal Code. Chapter 6 - 17 "Tree Protection" was recently amended to clarify some minor changes that don't substantially alter the purpose of the code. These regulations spell out what a "protected tree" is - a tree located on developed property that has a trunk diameter of twelve inches or more that is one of ten species, mostly oaks - see adjacent box for a complete listing. Adjustments also include replacement tree substitution ratios and in-lieu fees.

Many residents may be unaware that, "A category I or category II permit under sections 6-1706 or 6-1707 is required to remove or destroy a protected tree," according to the Municipal Code. Although, "When a hazardous or dangerous condition requires immediate action to protect life or property - the manager can grant an emergency tree removal permit."

In general, private property owners need a permit to remove a protected tree if it poses an imminent threat to private property. "We usually act on it on that day" said Michael Cass, Assistant Planner with the City of Lafayette. However there are some exceptions, when in doubt call the Planning Division at (925) 284-1976.

"Homeowners are responsible for maintaining their trees," said Public Works Services Manager Ron Lefler. If there's a windy storm that causes a property owner's tree to fall across a road, obstructing traffic, "Call police dispatch at (925) 284-5010," said Lefler. "The police then call the foreman and someone from Public Works will respond." The homeowner is responsible for the cost, which could run from a few hundred dollars to much more if a crane is needed to remove a large tree.

However, if your tree or a large branch falls across a fence between you and your neighbor, damaging the fence or your neighbor's home - it's time to call your insurance carrier. "Depending on coverage, it could be covered by your homeowner's liability insurance," said Debbie Peters of State Farm Insurance.

Protected Trees

in Lafayette

Coast Live Oak

Canyon Oak

Blue Oak

White Oak

Black Oak

Valley Oak

Interior live Oak

California Bay

California Buckeye

Madrone

Reach the reporter at: cathy@lamorindaweekly.com

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA