

Council Policy

Management of

Street Trees

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1. INTRODUCTION

The street trees of Kawerau are widely regarded as a valuable asset to the community. Consequently, it is imperative for council to establish a comprehensive policy that governs street tree management. Street trees enhance the aesthetic appeal of the streets and berms, and they also play a vital role in cooling road surfaces and the surrounding environment during the warmer months.

However, street trees can also cause damage to footpaths and roads while potentially disrupting water supply, wastewater, and stormwater systems. Street trees can also pose risks to individuals, property, and vehicles when uprooted by strong winds. They may also interfere with overhead utility lines and impact the effectiveness of street lighting.

Indigenous trees hold particular significance as they provide essential habitat for native wildlife and contribute to the stabilisation of soil around footpaths and roadways. They can also carry cultural importance for tangata whenua representing certain pūrākau and histories.

The management of street trees can become a delicate issue. For example, the mix of Indigenous, native, and introduced species can lead to debates within the community. Debates can also occur where residents form special attachments to trees that may require removal.

Therefore, this policy is designed to provide a framework for the management of street trees within the Kawerau District.

2. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this policy is to clearly articulate Council's strategy concerning the selection, maintenance, removal, and succession of street trees within the District.

This policy aims to establish a consistent and unified framework that applies to all street trees throughout the District ensuring that the following strategic objectives guide decision-making:

- Environmental sustainability and climate considerations
- Aesthetic considerations
- Community values and tikanga

Where tikanga considerations are appropriate Council must seek the advice of its Iwi Liaison and Cultural Advisor.

The following guidelines will address criteria such as species selection based on growth habits, resilience to local climate conditions, and suitability for urban settings. In addition, the policy outlines best practices for tree maintenance, including pruning schedules, pest management, and irrigation needs.

For the removal of trees, the policy specifies circumstances under which a tree may be deemed hazardous, diseased, or detrimental to infrastructure, as well as the necessary procedures for replanting efforts. Finally, the succession plan emphasises the importance of

planting new trees to maintain and enhance the street trees, ensuring that future generations can enjoy the environmental and social benefits that well-maintained street trees provide.

3. PRINCIPLES

In implementing the strategic objectives regarding the management of street trees, Council will adhere to the following principles:

- **Preservation of Landscape:** Street trees are a vital component of Kawerau's urban landscape and ecological health, contributing to improved air quality, biodiversity, and aesthetic value. Therefore, it is imperative to preserve and maintain existing street trees as integral elements of the community.
- **Selection of Appropriate Species:** The selection of appropriate tree species must take into account local climate, soil conditions, and biodiversity. By choosing well-managed species that are suited to their planting sites, Council can significantly enhance the visual appeal and overall atmosphere of the town, benefiting both residents and visitors. Native species must be prioritised to promote local wildlife and reduce maintenance needs.
- **Best Practices in Arboriculture:** To ensure the effective management of street trees, it is essential to implement best practices in arboriculture. This includes regular health assessments, appropriate pruning techniques, and pest and disease management strategies tailored to specific species, as well as community engagement in tree care initiatives.
- **Mitigation of Risks and Nuisances:** The presence of inappropriate tree species—those that may be invasive, poorly suited to the urban environment, or prone to structural failure—can pose risks and nuisances such as falling branches or root damage to sidewalks and utilities.
- **Health and Safety Focus:** The health and safety of individuals residing near street trees is a primary consideration in all management decisions. This includes evaluating the potential impacts of tree growth on surrounding properties, pedestrian pathways, and infrastructure ensuring that appropriate action is undertaken to promote the health and safety of the community.

By adhering to these principles, Council aims to foster a sustainable and vibrant environment for all inhabitants of Kawerau.

4. DEFINITIONS

Immediate vicinity means the area of the section or plot of land in which a street tree is situated in front of, and the two adjoining sections or plots to the immediate left and right of that section or plot.

Inappropriate street tree	means a street tree that can cause harm or nuisance to people, or danger to property or infrastructure.
Infrastructure	means public services such as footpaths, kerbing, drains, overhead wires and underground services.
Property	means public or privately owned buildings and vehicles, and privately owned landscape features such as fences, pergolas, driveways and footpaths.
Street tree	means a tree growing on Council property near a street or footpath and is managed by Council.
Arboriculture	means the cultivation, management, and study of trees, shrubs, vines, and other perennial woody plants.
Streetscape	refers to the collective appearance of all buildings, footpaths, gardens, and landscaping along a street.
Native species	refers to plants or animals that naturally occur in a particular region or ecosystem, meaning they arrived and thrived there without human introduction or intervention.
Indigenous Trees	refers to plants that are only found in a specific region or ecosystem and have naturally evolved there.

5. SCOPE

This policy applies to street trees situated within the District's roadway corridor, as well as trees located adjacent to footpaths and access routes.

It is important to note that this policy excludes trees situated on private property or within Council reserves that are not part of the designated roadway corridor areas. Trees in public parks and Council reserves are managed through the Reserves Management Plan.

6. POLICY STATEMENT

This policy outlines the management process used to provide effective management of the District's street trees.

6.1. Streetscape Design

Wherever street trees are present or proposed, any potential conflicts with utility infrastructure and roadway assets will be evaluated prior to making decisions regarding the retention, maintenance, or removal of the trees.

Street trees are vital in diminishing the perceived expanse of a street and in effectively reducing excessive vehicle speeds. However, it is imperative that trees are planted and

maintained in a manner that does not obstruct drivers' visibility on both the berms and within the roadway.

Furthermore, trees must be readily accessible for necessary pruning and removal operations. All associated costs, including those related to traffic management plans and specialised equipment, must also be considered in this assessment.

6.2. Selection

Council evaluate and select tree species that are well-suited for planting along each street within the District. This selection process will be guided by a range of characteristics specific to each tree species, including their resilience to local environmental conditions, expected longevity, aesthetic qualities such as colour and form, mature height and width dimensions, root structure compatibility with urban infrastructure, shading capabilities to enhance public comfort, and the seasonal shedding patterns of leaves and other organic materials.

Council staff also gain input from local residents and building occupants who have a vested interest in the tree plantings along their respective streets. Their insights are invaluable in ensuring that the chosen species not only thrives in the urban landscape but also meets the needs and preferences of the community.

Once the appropriate tree species have been identified, the selected trees serve not only as the foundation for initial plantings, but will also be incorporated into future planting initiatives on that specific street.

6.3. Positioning

Street trees are typically positioned in the centre of road berms to maximise their ability to provide shade, improve air quality, and enhance the aesthetics of the neighbourhood. In residential neighbourhoods, it is standard practice to plant one street tree for each residence, ensuring that each home benefits from the environmental and social advantages of having greenery nearby.

The placement of street trees must adhere to specific minimum distance requirements to promote safety and functionality within the urban landscape. These requirements include:

- A minimum distance of 3.0 metres from any driveway to ensure unobstructed vehicle access and visibility.
- A distance of 8.0 metres from any streetlight, allowing for full illumination and visibility of the light source.
- A spacing of 6.0 metres from any intersection to enhance sightlines and facilitate safe navigation for pedestrians and vehicles.
- A minimum of 5.0 metres from any bus stop or school speed limit sign to prevent obstructions that could distract or impede the flow of traffic.

- A clearance of 1.5 metres from any underground services, such as water, gas, or electrical lines, if feasible, to avoid potential damage to essential infrastructure.

It is crucial to ensure that trees are not planted in locations that may pose a safety risk, such as areas with high pedestrian traffic or visibility obstructions.

Furthermore, only tree species that are guaranteed to achieve a maximum height of 3 metres at maturity shall be planted on berms located beneath overhead power lines. This precaution helps to prevent interference with power lines and ensures the ongoing safety and maintenance of both the trees and the overhead infrastructure.

6.4. Planting

Street trees will be planted at appropriate times to ensure that young plants are safeguarded against extreme weather conditions.

A comprehensive database will be maintained for all street trees, encompassing details such as species, planting date, condition, and estimated replacement date.

Council personnel will engage with Before-U-Dig to guarantee that no service utility infrastructure is compromised during the planting process.

Only trees that are well-branched, symmetrical, and healthy will be selected for planting. The designated arborist will verify that each tree is devoid of pests and diseases.

The planting of street trees will be conducted by qualified personnel or accredited contractors. Planting holes and soil preparation will be adequately sized to accommodate the root systems of the respective species. Appropriate stakes will be deployed according to the dimensions of each plant.

Council reserves the right to remove any tree planted within a street berm by individuals or groups not authorised by Council.

6.5. Maintenance

To ensure that street trees throughout the District remain visually appealing and are maintained in optimal condition, thereby mitigating any risks to individuals and property, the Parks and Reserves staff follow a scheduled seasonal programme for monitoring and maintenance. This programme is conducted under the expert guidance of a qualified arborist who possesses extensive knowledge in tree care and urban forestry.

The maintenance of street trees will adhere to arboriculture standards that carefully balance several key objectives:

- **Maximising Tree Health:** This involves regular assessments of tree resilience and disease prevention measures. Staff will implement practices such as proper mulching, pruning, and pest management to promote healthy growth.
- **Facilitating Natural Growth and Development:** Every effort will be made to support the natural structure and form of each tree. This includes strategic pruning to

encourage strong branch development and proper canopy formation, as well as monitoring for signs of stress or damage that may hinder growth.

- **Minimising Harm and Inconvenience to Individuals:** The maintenance protocol will include routine inspections to identify any potential hazards posed by overhanging branches or root encroachment on sidewalks and roadways. Any identified risks will be promptly addressed to ensure public safety and ease of access.
- **Preventing Damage to Property and Infrastructure:** A proactive approach will be taken to mitigate any potential risks that street trees may pose to nearby structures, utilities, and pathways. This includes root management strategies and careful assessments of tree placement in relation to buildings and paved areas.

Through these measures, the Parks and Reserves staff aim to maintain a healthy, safe, and aesthetically pleasing environment for the community, ensuring that street trees continue to thrive while minimising any disruptions they may cause.

6.6. Removal

Parks and reserves personnel will exercise due diligence to maintain an equilibrium between the removal of trees that pose problems and the planting of new street trees, thereby maintaining the aesthetic quality of our urban environments on a district-wide basis.

Assessments regarding the removal of street trees will be conducted by Parks and Reserves personnel. During this process, expert guidance from a qualified arborist may be sought to support the assessment.

Council may proceed with the removal of a street tree under the following circumstances:

- The tree has been evaluated by Council arborist and deemed inappropriate for the location.
- The tree poses safety concerns.
- The tree is diseased, dying, or in a condition that cannot be effectively improved through treatment.
- There have been complaints from one or more neighbouring residents or building occupants regarding substantive harm or nuisance caused by the tree.
- The tree's roots are damaging other infrastructure, including footpaths, irrigation systems, or overhead lines.
- Removal of the tree is necessary to facilitate other Council-approved works.
- The tree causes significant leaf, flower, seed, fruit, or branch fall onto private property.

Tree removal will require the authorisation of the Group Manager, Operations & Services.

Trees shall only be removed by Council Parks and Reserves team or an approved contractor.

In considering whether to remove a street tree, staff will engage with residents and building occupants in the immediate vicinity of the tree's location. Council may provide the wood from a felled tree to nearby neighbours upon request, or to a Council-designated community organisation for use as firewood.

All plant matter that is unsuitable for firewood will be disposed of by Council. Tree stumps will be removed at the earliest opportunity, and the area will be levelled and re-grassed accordingly.

6.7. Succession

The trees selected for the designated street will be specifically utilised for replanting purposes, ensuring that we contribute positively to the local ecosystem.

Tree planting will be conducted promptly following the removal of the existing trees, ideally within the same planting season, to minimise environmental disruption.

This process will adhere strictly to established arboriculture best practices, which includes selecting species resilient to local conditions and ensuring proper planting techniques are employed. The timing of the planting will also depend on the availability of high-quality, suitable tree stock that meets ecological and aesthetic criteria.

It is essential to understand that the new trees may not be replanted in the exact locations from which the street trees were removed. This decision will be based on the guidelines set out in section 6.3.