

Saanich Tree Bylaw Updates - FAQ

Q: What is a Tree Protection Bylaw?

A. A tree bylaw is a set of rules and regulations determining how trees are protected, managed and removed. A tree bylaw usually defines what trees are protected, when a tree removal permit may be necessary, how replanting works and applicable fees, bonds and enforcement mechanisms. Saanich has had a tree bylaw since 1993. Saanich's current bylaw is named the Tree Protection Bylaw.

Q. What are the limitations of the Tree Protection Bylaw?

A. The Tree Protection Bylaw can:

- Regulate cutting or damaging trees
- Define protected trees and set retention and replacement rules
- Require tree protection during development
- Coordinate with zoning, subdivision, and development permit processes
- Enforce compliance with securities, inspections, and penalties

The Tree Protection Bylaw cannot:

- Prevent land from being used or developed for uses and densities already permitted in zoning
- Override provincial legislation or utility safety requirements

Q. Why is the Tree Protection Bylaw being updated?

A. The update is driven by two key factors. New provincial housing legislation (Bills 44, 46, and 47) changes how housing is planned and built, which affects how trees can be managed on development sites. The update also supports alignment with the Urban Forest Strategy and Council direction under Saanich's [2023-2027 Strategic Plan](#), connecting tree management with broader municipal goals. Updating the bylaw will support tree retention and replacement as housing policy evolves and will streamline bylaw coordination and administration.

Q. Where will the updated Tree Protection Bylaw apply?

A. The bylaw will continue to apply to public (District owned) and private land, including trees in residential and commercial spaces. Trees in agricultural reserves, tree farms and provincial or federal land will remain exempt.

Q. How can I review the draft bylaw?

A. Saanich is planning on hosting a public engagement session to share the results of the engagement and the recommended directions for the Bylaw updates in late January or February. The full draft Bylaw will be available as part of the Council agenda package when the project moves to that stage.



Q. How will the updated Bylaw address invasive tree species?

A. The updated bylaw plans to address challenges associated with invasive and inappropriate tree species, potentially facilitating removal and replacement with a suitable tree species in a streamlined fashion.

Q. Will I still be able to remove a tree on my property?

A. The updated bylaw will provide enhanced measures to protect trees on private property; however, tree removals will still be allowed when necessary for safety, development and other valid reasons. Until a revised bylaw is passed, the existing Tree Protection Bylaw will continue to apply.

Q. If someone removes a tree, will they need to plant a replacement tree?

A. Yes. Under the current bylaw the number of replacement trees required is determined during the permit process. The updated bylaw will continue to require replacement trees, but may change how many are required to allow more flexible, property-specific solutions.

Q. How will the bylaw address trees on shared properties?

A. Disputes between neighbours over shared trees will continue to be resolved through civil processes.

Q. Where can I learn more about trees in Saanich?

A. [Saanich's Urban Forest](#) webpage hosts information on planting programs, permits, tree care tips, and more.

