

SDCI**Director's Rule 7-2024**

Applicant: City of Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections	Page 1 of 4	Supersedes: DR 7-2023
	Publication: 6/10/2024	Effective: 6/27/2024
Subject: Designation of Tier 2 Trees	Code and Section Reference: Table A for SMC 25.11.050 Tree Protection	
	Type of Rule: Code Interpretation	
	Ordinance Authority: SMC 3.06.040	
Index: Land Use Code/Technical Standards and Procedural Requirements	<div><div>Approved</div><div>Date</div></div> <div><div></div><div></div></div> <div>Nathan Torgelson, Director, SDCI</div>	

Purpose and Background

Seattle's tree protection regulations categorize trees into 4 different tier groups:

- "Tier 1 tree" means a heritage tree. A heritage tree is a tree or group of trees as defined in Seattle Municipal Code, Title 15.
- "Tier 2 tree" means any tree that is 24 inches in diameter at standard height (DSH) or greater, tree groves, each tree comprising a tree grove, and specific tree species below 24 inches in diameter at standard height as provided by this Rule or successor Rule.
- "Tier 3 tree" means any tree that is 12 inches in diameter at standard height or greater but less than 24 inches in diameter at standard height and is not defined as a Tier 1 or Tier 2 tree.
- "Tier 4 tree" means any tree that is 6 inches or greater in diameter at standard height but less than 12 inches in diameter at standard height and is not defined as a Tier 1 or Tier 2 tree.

The purpose of this Rule is to provide guidance regarding the designation of Tier 2 trees pursuant to Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) Chapter 25.11.

Rule

TIER 2 TREE DESIGNATION

Table 1 of this rule provides a list of size thresholds for Tier 2 trees that are less than 24" DSH. In addition, any named cultivars or subspecies of species on the following list have the same diameter threshold as the species on the list. For example, a Japanese maple cultivar (*Acer palmatum* "Burgundy Lace") has the same threshold diameter as Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum*).

For all species not listed in Table 1, the threshold diameter is 24" DSH or greater, except that the following are not Tier 2 trees regardless of the size measured at DSH:

- Red alder (*Alnus rubra*), black cottonwood (*Populus trichocarpa*), Lombardy poplar (*Populus nigra* 'Italica'), and bitter cherry (*Prunus emarginata*). These trees are designated as Tier 3 trees when 12 inches DSH or greater.
- Any tree that is listed on the adopted and as subsequently revised King County Noxious Weed List, including invasive trees and/or nuisance trees which means any tree species that is documented on the King County Noxious Weed Board's Class A, Class B, Class C Noxious Weed, or any Weeds of Concern Lists, except that the following trees shall not be considered an invasive tree or nuisance tree: Black locust – (*Robinia pseudoacacia*); Harlequin (prev. Norway) maple – (*Acer platanoides*); and Horse chestnut – (*Aesculus hippocastanum*).

Table 1: Size Thresholds for Tier 2 Trees

ALDER, Sitka – <i>Alnus sinuata</i>	6"
APPLE, Orchard (Common) – <i>Malus sp.</i>	20"
ASH, European – <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	22"
ASPEN, Quaking – <i>Populus tremuloides</i>	12"
BIRCH, Paper – <i>Betula papyrifera</i>	20"
CASCARA – <i>Rhamnus purshiana</i>	8"
CHERRY, Japanese Flowering – <i>Prunus sp.</i> (<i>kwanzan</i> , <i>serrula</i> , <i>serrulata</i> , <i>sargentii</i> , <i>subhirtella</i> , <i>yedoensis</i>)	23"
CRABAPPLE, Pacific – <i>Malus fusca</i>	12"
DOGWOOD, Eastern – <i>Cornus florida</i>	12"
DOGWOOD, Kousa – <i>Cornus kousa</i>	12"
DOGWOOD, Pacific – <i>Cornus nuttallii</i>	6"
HAWTHORN, Black – <i>Crataegus douglasii</i>	6"
HAWTHORN, Washington – <i>Crataegus phaenopyrum</i>	9"
HORNBEAM, European – <i>Carpinus betulus</i>	16"
LOCUST, Honey – <i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i>	20"
MADRONA – <i>Arbutus menziesii</i>	6"
MAGNOLIA, Southern – <i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>	16"
MAPLE, Dwarf or Rocky Mountain – <i>Acer glabrum</i> var. <i>Douglasii</i>	6"
MAPLE, Japanese – <i>Acer palmatum</i>	12"
MAPLE, Paperbark – <i>Acer griseum</i>	12"

MAPLE, Vine – <i>Acer circinatum</i>	8"
MONKEY PUZZLE TREE – <i>Araucaria araucana</i>	22"
OAK, Oregon White or Garry – <i>Quercus garryana</i>	6"
PEAR, Callery – <i>Pyrus calleryana</i>	13"
PINE, Lodgepole – <i>Pinus contorta</i>	6"
PINE, Shore – <i>Pinus contorta</i> 'contorta'	12"
PLUM, CHERRY – <i>Prunus cerasifera</i>	21"
SERVICEBERRY, Western – <i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>	6"
SNOWBELL, Japanese – <i>Styrax japonica</i>	12"
SPRUCE, Sitka – <i>Picea sitchensis</i>	6"
WILLOW (All native species) – <i>Salix</i> sp. (<i>Geyeriana</i> ver <i>meleina</i> , <i>eriocephala</i> ssp. <i>mackenzieana</i> , <i>Hookeriana</i> , <i>Piperi</i> , <i>Scouleriana</i> , <i>sitchensis</i>)	8"
YEW, Pacific – <i>Taxus brevifolia</i>	6"

¹ This table is based on Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast, 2016, by Jim Pojar, Andy MacKinnon; Trees and Shrubs of the Pacific Northwest, 2014, by Mark Turner, Ellen Kuhlmann; Trees of Seattle, 2nd edition, 2006, by Arthur Lee Jacobson; Champion Trees of Washington State, 1996, by Robert Van Pelt; International Society of Arboriculture, <https://www.isa-arbor.com/>

For projects vested prior to July 30, 2023, superseded rule 16-2008 still applies and is available at SDCI's website at this link: [Director's Rules, Rescinded Rules - Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections](#)

RISK ASSESSMENT

Trees that meet Tier 2 tree designation are not regulated as such as part of a development permit application when SDCI finds that the tree should be removed based on a risk assessment produced by a registered tree service provider who is currently credentialed with an ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualification. The risk assessment must document that the tree is considered a High Risk hazard or that the tree has little or no likelihood of survival after construction. In making this determination, the registered tree service provider must consider crown size, structure, disease, past maintenance practice, potential damage to existing or future targets, risk mitigation options, proposed demolition and construction methods, and the likelihood of survival after construction. Tree service providers conducting commercial tree work on these trees must comply with the tree service provider registry requirements of SMC Chapter 25.11 Subsection 25.11.100. The replacement requirements of SMC Chapter 25 Subsection 25.11.090 apply.

TREE MEASUREMENT

As part of a development permit application, trees that do not meet Tier 2 tree designation may be considered Tier 2 trees, at the applicant's option, if the tree size is 23 inches DSH or greater for any tree not included in Table 1 of this rule or is within one (1) inch of the size threshold of the tree as listed in Table 1 of this rule. These trees shall be protected by covenant pursuant to SMC 25.11 Subsection 25.11.060.D.

SDCI may require photo documentation and/or other evidence to confirm whether a tree meets the Tier 2 tree designation per this Rule or as defined in SMC Chapter 25.11.

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