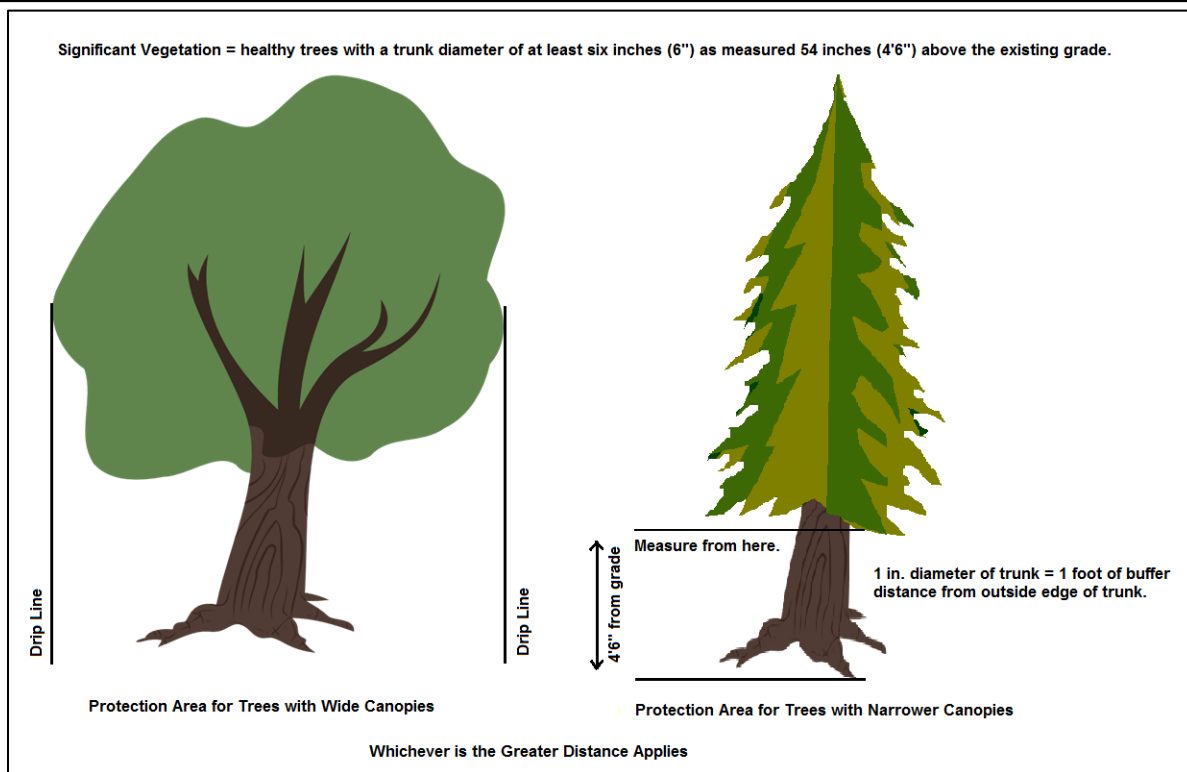


## Where Do I Need to Protect Trees?



### What is the Difference between Significant Vegetation and Native Vegetation?

Significant Vegetation refers to healthy trees with a diameter over six inches wide as measures from 54 inches (4' 6") above the existing grade. Native vegetation is the natural vegetation growing on the site before it has been cleared over a period of the last five years.

### Where Do I have to Preserve Native and/or Significant Vegetation?

You are required to keep all Native Vegetation (including Significant Vegetation) within the site's buffers and landscaping areas. On non-residential and multi-family sites, you must incorporate at least 20% of the natural significant vegetation into the site plan. For residential development, you are encouraged, but not required, to retain Significant Vegetation on other parts of your site as well. For sites that will remain vacant after clearing, a total of 50% of the Significant Vegetation must be retained.

Retention of other existing vegetation for landscaping is strongly encouraged; however, it must be equal to or better than available nursery stock. For site plans, clearing is only permitted once civil plans for the development of the specific area have been approved. (GHMC [17.78.050](#) and [17.99.240](#))

### Where Can I Build Near Significant Vegetation?

You must protect significant trees from the drip line in to the trunk. You may not perform any construction activity inside the drip line. You may be able to take certain actions, such as installing impervious or compactible surface inside the drip line, if those actions are recommended by a certified arborist. Arborist reports need to be submitted to the City for review prior to work occurring.

**Changes in Grade:** You may not change the grade level around a significant tree in a way might endanger the tree's health. If you are changing the grade level outside the drip line, you must construct a dry rock

wall or rock well around the tree. The diameter of this wall or well must be capable of protecting the tree. Proof of professional design may be required.

**Construction Fencing:** During construction, you must install a protective barricade outside the drip line of all significant vegetation and around areas of protected native vegetation. Staff will review the proposed area of disturbance and require installation of a protective barricade before major excavation with heavy equipment begins. The barricade must be made of cylindrical steel posts or four-inch by four-inch (4"x4") wood posts with chain link fence attached. Fence posts shall be eight feet (8') on center connected with two-inch by four-inch (2"x4") top rails or an equivalent support system. Fence height must be a minimum of four feet (4') high.

**Replacement:** If trees required to be retained pursuant to this title or a land use approval are subsequently removed or damaged, they shall be replaced by at least one and one-half times the tree diameter removed (ex. a 10-inch DBH tree removed will equal 15-inch DBH of tree diameter replaced). A single tree may be replaced with multiple trees provided the total tree diameter at DBH equals the required replacement value. Replacement trees shall be a minimum of six-foot trees for evergreens or two-inch caliper for deciduous trees at planting. The trees removed shall be replaced with trees of the same type, evergreen or deciduous. Shrubs and ground cover shall also be replaced when replacing tree(s). The shrubs and ground cover shall be planted within the limits of the previous tree stand canopy.

### **How is the Drip Line Measured?**

The drip line is measured in two ways, depending on the growth habit of the tree. The drip line that applies to your tree is whichever of the following results in a greater distance.

**For Wide Canopies:** The drip line is measured as a line extending from the extreme reach of a tree's branches down to the ground.

**For Narrow Canopies:** The drip line is a buffer distance extending in a circle measuring one foot in distance from the trunk for every one inch in diameter of the trunk. The diameter is measured 54 inches (4' 6") from the existing grade. (See GMHC 17.99.590 and graphic on the front page).

### **What is required for other areas of Native Vegetation?**

Landscape or buffer areas should consist of native vegetation. When approved by staff, you must also protect these areas with construction fencing as described above. The construction fencing must be located outside a 10-foot-wide no-construction zone. Clearing, grading or contour alteration is not permitted within this no-construction area unless a qualified arborist provides written documentation that proposed construction activity within the 10-foot setback would not harm existing vegetation within the designated landscape or buffer area.

### **Where may I Thin Trees and How may they be Trimmed?**

**Thinning:** In areas of natural vegetation, you may thin saplings to avoid overcrowding as long as the existing trees are healthy and full. Trees may be thinned to 12 to 15 feet on center, though you must first seek City approval. You may remove dying and dangerous trees upon the recommendation of a certified arborist and with City approval. You must keep the full understory shrubby, except for invasive species.

**Trimming:** Tree trimming must preserve the tree's natural symmetry. Topping is prohibited unless recommended by an ISA Certified Arborist for health or safety reasons. Limbing-up must retain sufficient crown to preserve the tree's fullness and health.

Client Assistance Memos are not intended to replace the Gig Harbor Municipal Code. Should you have any questions regarding this information please call the Planner of the Day at (253) 851-6170.