Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Do I need a permit to remove a tree?
A. A permit is required to remove any tree that is not exempted by the tree ordinance. Section 72-835 of the Tree Preservation Ordinance lists general exemptions.

Q. How do I know if my proposed tree removal is exempt from a tree permit?
A. Section 72-835 of the Tree Preservation Ordinance lists general exemptions. Exemptions include specific nuisance trees; deteriorated trees, if removed with prior approval of the County Forester; and trees on property classified or zoned for agriculture, such as A-1, A-2, A-3 (over 2.5 acres), A-4, RC, RA, MH3, MH4 (over 2.5 acres), OTR, ORE, OCR or FR.

If the property is zoned for residential purposes, a single-family or two-family home is currently located on the property, and the home is owner-occupied, the property is also exempt from tree permitting requirements. However, if the home is being demolished and replaced, this exemption may not apply.

Please note that, even if a tree permit is not required, other permit requirements may apply, such as protection of threatened or endangered species and wetland protection. Please contact Environmental Permitting at 386-736-5927 if you are unsure whether a permit is required.

Q. Do I need a tree permit to underbrush my lot?
A. A tree permit is not required to underbrush. However, any protected tree in the zoning setbacks, as well as any historic tree in the buildable area, must not be harmed. Damage to the root system of the trees must also be avoided. Furthermore, underbrushing is not permitted within wetlands or wetland buffers. Please contact Environmental Permitting at 386-736-5927 if you are unsure whether a permit is required.

Q. I live in a mobile home community and rent my lot. Do I need a permit to remove a tree I think may pose a hazard to my home?
A. Tree removal in mobile home rental parks is considered a commercial activity and may require permitting and replacement. However, tree permits will only be issued to the mobile home park owner or designee (such as a park manager), not individual occupants. The park manager may call Environmental Permitting at 386-736-5927 to request a courtesy tree inspection, and the tree inspector will determine if a permit is required. If a permit is required, the park owner or designee can apply by using the Land Development Division Application for Development Permit and checking the Tree Removal box in Section 1.

Q. Who is responsible for my neighbor’s tree that has fallen into or overhangs my yard?
A. This is a civil matter between you and your neighbor.

Q. There is a dead tree in the right-of-way posing a hazard to pedestrians and drivers. Who should I contact?
A. Please contact one of the Road and Bridge Division offices.

Q. How do I obtain a tree removal permit?
A. Please visit our Trees site. The requirements and application process vary depending on whether the proposed development is commercial or residential.
Q. What is a protected tree?
A. For commercial construction, essentially all trees 6” DBH and larger are protected. For residential construction, all trees 6” DBH and larger are protected within the setback areas, which are around the perimeter of the lot and are listed in the Volusia County Zoning Ordinance. Historic trees are also protected in the buildable area of the lot, which is the center portion of the lot not included in the required zoning setback areas. To determine your building setbacks, please contact the Zoning office at 386-943-7059. Specific nuisance trees are not protected regardless of size, zoning, or location.

Q. Are pine trees and palm trees protected?
A. Yes. Pine trees and palm trees 6” DBH or larger are protected.

Q. Does Volusia County have a minimum tree requirement?
A. Yes. At least one tree must be provided for each 2,500 square feet of lot area. This may include existing trees that are retained and properly protected and/or new trees that are planted on site. For lots without trees or without enough trees, trees need to be planted to meet this minimum requirement.

Q. What trees are acceptable to meet minimum standards and/or replacement?
A. Trees planted must meet the requirements for Florida Number 1 or better grade as defined by the Grades and Standards for Nursery Plants, State of Florida, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Trees must be a minimum of 2” caliper in diameter and a minimum of 6 feet in height. For a list of acceptable tree species, click here.

Q. How do I figure out the replacement value for protected trees that were removed?
A. Replacement is calculated at 15% of the cross sectional square inches of most trees removed (but 7% for sand pines). To determine cross sectional area, click here. To determine how many trees you may need to plant to meet your replacement requirements, use this table.

Existing trees not specifically protected by the ordinance may be used as replacement credit. For residential projects, this could include trees less than 6” DBH but larger than 2” caliper located within setback areas and trees larger than 2” caliper within buildable areas. For commercial projects, this could include trees less than 6” DBH but larger than 2” caliper located anywhere on site.

Trees to be used for replacement credit must be in good condition, must be viable and healthy, and must have been adequately protected during construction. Determination of acceptability of the trees for replacement credit will be at the discretion of Environmental Permitting.

Q. Am I required to maintain the trees that count towards minimum standards and/or replacement?
A. Yes. The property owner is responsible for the maintenance and health of all existing and planted trees that are used for replacement and/or to meet minimum standards for a minimum of two years. If any of those trees die or are removed from the property within the two-year timeframe, then they must be replaced within 60 days with a new two-year timeframe starting from the date of the new planting.
Q. Can I clear a vacant commercial lot?
A. Tree removal is not permitted on an undeveloped commercial property without an approved development plan, but may be approved once a development order and corresponding tree permit have been issued.

Q. How do I install tree protection?
A. Please click here to view a diagram of properly installed tree protection.

Q. What is DBH and how do I measure the DBH of a tree?
A. DBH is the abbreviation for diameter at breast height and is defined as the trunk diameter of a tree measured four and one-half (4½ or 4.5) feet above the average ground level at the base of the tree. If the tree forks above 4.5 feet above ground level, it is measured below the swell resulting from the double stem. Stems that fork below 4.5 feet above ground level are considered separate trees.
   To determine DBH, use a special diameter measuring tape and wrap it around the tree at a point 4.5 feet above the ground. If a diameter tape is not available, use a regular measuring tape to get the circumference and divide that by 3.14 to get the diameter.

Q. What is the definition of a historic tree?
A. A historic tree is defined as a live oak (Quercus virginiana) or bald cypress (Taxodium distichum) thirty-six (36) inches DBH or greater or other tree which is determined by the Volusia County Council to be of such unique and intrinsic value to the general public because of its size, age, historic association, or ecological value as to justify this classification. Any tree in this county selected and duly designated a Florida State Champion, United States Champion or a World Champion by the American Forestry Association is also defined as a historic tree.

Q. Do I need a permit to remove a historic tree?
A. Historic trees may only be removed if approved by the Development Review Committee (DRC). For questions about historic tree removal, contact Environmental Permitting at 386-736-5927 x 12093.

Q. What are the tree permit requirements for specimen trees?
A. Specimen tree requirements apply only to commercial development, not residential construction. For specimen tree requirements, please read Section 72-843(b) of the Tree Preservation Ordinance.

Q. What is the definition of a tree?
A. A tree is defined as any woody self-supporting plant characterized by having a single trunk of at least six (6) inches DBH or multi-stem trunk system with well-developed crown at least fifteen (15) feet high as measured from its base.