



GREAT LAKE TAUPŌ
Taupō District Council

Tree and Vegetation Policy

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INTRODUCTION

Trees are a real asset to the Taupō district providing landscape amenity, shade, habitat for fauna, timber, and purification of the air. They have a significant positive impact on the environment through the enhancement and softening of the urban buildings, providing shade, seasonal colour and amenity. Trees contribute positively to the environment; they aid climatic control, and are part of ecological processes.

Despite all their positive attributes, trees can also cause nuisance and damage and at times lead to considerable disharmonies between neighbours, residents and council. Trees can create divided community opinion and disagreement. On occasion such disagreement can result in unauthorised pruning and removal.

Taupō District Council manages trees on council owned land including parks, reserves, esplanade reserves, gullies and berms on rural roads and urban streets. Management includes planting, pruning, trimming, and removal using best arboricultural practices. This policy outlines the responsibilities and procedures council staff use to manage trees and vegetation on council land.

The policy also provides a process for planting and tree removal decisions. Where those decisions are in conflict with public opinion or where tree removal may result in a significant impact on the surrounding environment, the policy provides a process for Council's elected members to make a decision. The policy also provides guidance on other relevant information to be considered when managing trees.

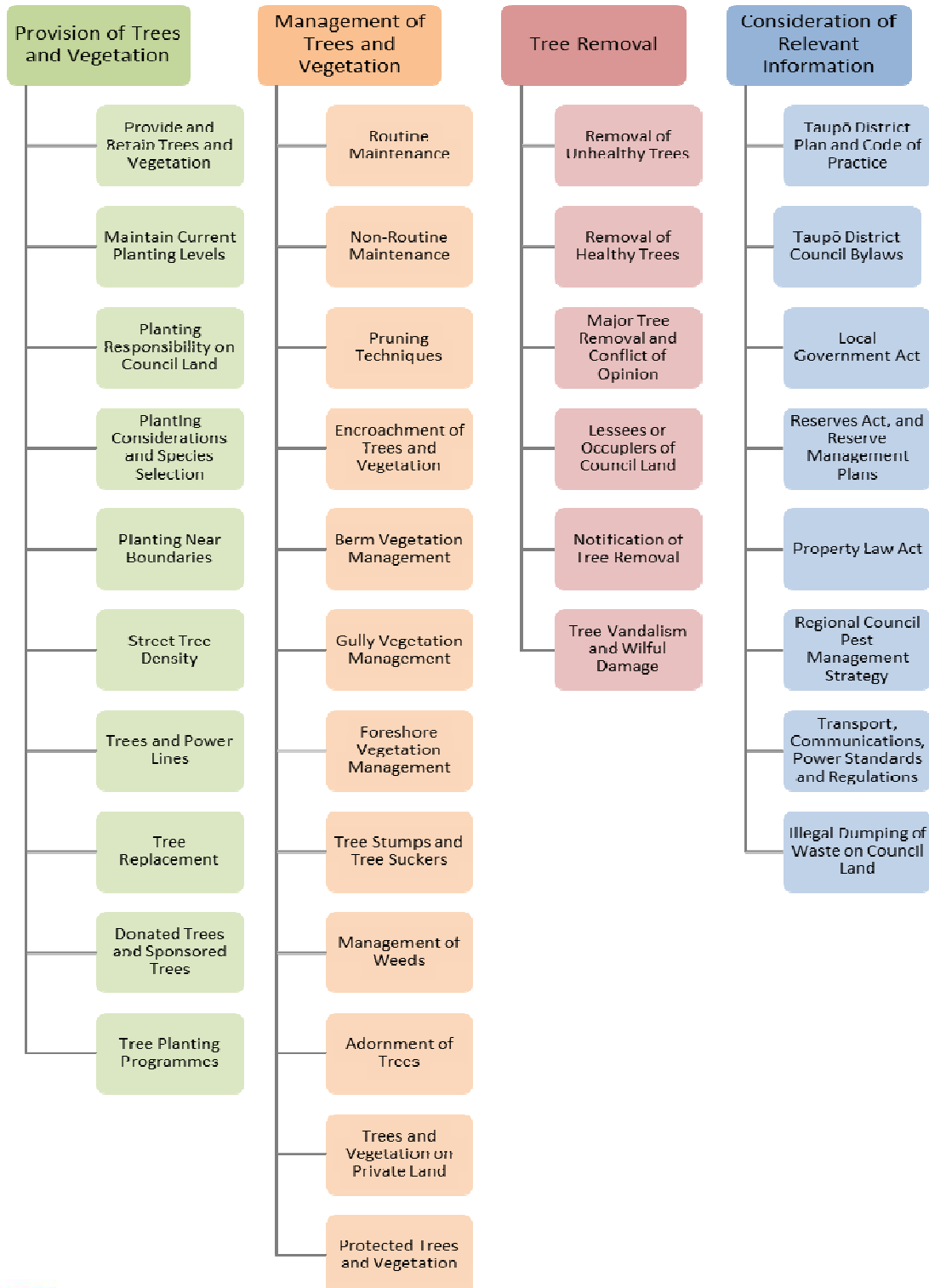
PURPOSE

The Tree and Vegetation Policy is an operational document to provide consistency in decision making for the management of trees and vegetation on council land in the Taupō District.



POLICY STRUCTURE

The policy is structured by four key objectives, which are implemented through the policies outlined below. It is important to note that other methods may exist, which may also achieve the objectives and purpose.



OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

Objective 1 – Provision of Trees and Vegetation

To provide appropriate new and replacement trees and vegetation on council land in a way that maintains and enhances the amenity, character and environment of the Taupō District.

Objective 1 provides the overview that council aims to provide trees and vegetation to maintain and enhance amenity, wildlife, and character in the district. The objective also seeks to ensure that planting of trees considers site suitability, budget commitments and effects on neighbouring properties. Streets, parks, gullies, and esplanades/foreshore areas are some of the key public spaces that provide opportunities for trees and vegetation. These areas tend to be multiple purpose areas; plantings must be appropriate for the location.

With its colder climate the Taupō district lends itself well to a deciduous tree character providing colourful autumn displays. This provides an attractive contrast to indigenous vegetation areas particularly around the lake, along river edges and on the mountain ranges. Native tree and vegetation plantings are also common in the district's town centres. Exotic trees and vegetation which flower in winter can be selected to provide valuable food sources for native birds, to supplement native vegetation

Trees also have a role in maintaining and enhancing the environment, and the Council supports community groups in planting on council land where appropriate. Foreshore and erosion work is undertaken by Taupō District Council and Waikato Regional Council. Trees and vegetation have a key role to play in erosion protection of both the foreshore of Lake Taupō and gullies that convey flowing and ephemeral water drainage, as well as enhance amenity and provides recreation corridors.

Policy 1.1 – Provide and Retain Appropriate Trees and Vegetation

Provide and retain appropriate trees and vegetation on suitable council land, to maintain and enhance the amenity, character, and environment of the Taupō District.

Trees have an important and positive role to play in parks, reserves and open spaces, particularly within urban environments. Trees make a contribution to the good health of the Taupō district through providing amenity and character, while helping to reduce dust and pollutants as well as assisting to moderate climates through providing shade and shelter from winds.

Trees provide habitat for birds, insects and other wildlife. Perhaps most importantly trees provide beauty in the landscape and added amenity through flowers, form, autumn colour, berries and in this regard are generally pleasing to the community. Trees can have a positive impact on property values.

Council land available for planting tends to be multi-purpose areas in close proximity to private land. For this reason it is important that plantings are appropriate for the site and locational requirements, and the following policies in this section address this.

Policy 1.2 – Maintain Current Planting Levels

The current tree stock levels on council land will be maintained or enhanced where practicable, with a mixed age tree stock on each reserve.

Council will maintain the current level of trees and where there is ability will enhance the current tree stock on council land through additional tree plantings. This will be determined through the Asset Management Plans. Providing a mixed age tree stock assists in maintaining a mature level of trees at any one time, so that when trees are at the end of their life expectancy, are sick or dying, there is an appropriate level of established trees at varying ages to maintain a mature tree effect.

Policy 1.3 – Planting Responsibility on Council Land

Planting and selection of trees and vegetation on council land is the responsibility of council staff, or council authorised persons.

Planting of trees and vegetation on council land, including road berms is the responsibility of the council staff/contractors, to ensure safety to the public and ensure standard tree planting standards are followed.

Members of the public may seek approval from council to plant on council land. In respect to berms they may seek approval through the Corridor Access Request (CAR) process, where the planting of trees is not inconsistent with other policies in this document. For more information on the CAR process visit www.beforeudig.co.nz.

Council supports community initiatives for tree planting, and there will be times where members of the community will assist in planting, such as revegetation projects. In these instances the planting and public involvement will be approved by council first to ensure safety to the public is maintained.

In situations where trees and shrubs have been established on council land by organisations or individuals the trees and vegetation will be managed in line with this policy. The organisation or individual responsible for planting the tree/s will receive no special degree of consultation unless council has previously agreed to do so. The original planter of the tree has no authority to undertake tree pruning or removal on behalf of the council without specific council consent.

In some situations it may be necessary to remove plantings by members of the community where these have occurred without prior agreement. In these situations the council will attempt to consult with those concerned with the original planting prior to making any major change. Persons responsible for unauthorised planting may be requested to remove the plantings, or council may remove the planting and recover costs.

Policy 1.4 – Planting Considerations and Species Selection

New plantings will be the most suitable species for a location, considering particular site requirements and surrounding neighbours.

New tree planting on council land will be planned by appropriately skilled persons, and will generally take into account the need to provide a mixture of green open spaces and treed areas. Consideration

will be given to minimise the possible future impact new trees may have on essential services both above and below ground.

Community input will be welcome, when tree planting plans are prepared. Council staff will be seeking to plant trees that when mature will provide appropriate significant scale for the reserve and the community. Species selection will be approved by council staff.

As a good neighbour, the Taupō District Council will be sensitive to the desires of adjoining neighbours when planting trees and vegetation. For instance, by aiming to avoid planting trees that may block views, light, or planting at a density that would potentially cause difficulties to adjoining neighbours or users of the reserve. It is acknowledged that there is a desire by people to maintain views from their property to natural features and open landscapes. Trees which are likely to obstruct views, cause shade problems or have invasive roots will not be planted. (Obstruction of views is deemed to be the total blocking of the view, not the creation of a disrupted view).

Within reserves, council staff may consider trees not only for their amenity purposes but also for fruiting value and attractiveness to other flora and fauna, such as native mistletoe, bats or bees as appropriate. Planting selection for street trees will consider those that provide good street amenity and form, and for reserves those that provide good food source to bees and habitat to native wildlife. The use of native trees will also be considered along with trees that are attractive to bees and native birds. Council staff has a range of possible tree species suitable for council land, which is available on request. Other lists may also be considered, such as those held by Greening Taupō, and Department of Conservation.

The Taupō District Council Code of Practice for Development of Land outlines minimum requirements for development matters, some of which trees and vegetation may have an impact on – for example, vehicle sight lines, over head and under ground services, street tree distances. The planting or on-going establishment of trees and vegetation must ensure that the minimum requirements of the Code of Practice are not compromised.

General planting considerations include:

- Desire for views from private property,
- Views from public land
- Safety, visibility, and potential damage to infrastructure
- The effects that growing trees may have on the supply of electricity when growing under or near powerlines, in accordance with the Schedule Growth Limit Zones printed in the Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations 2003.
- Current and future budget commitments in terms of ongoing maintenance.
- Local amenity
- Soil type
- Drainage
- Local climate
- Width of berm
- Location of services
- Suitability of species in terms of growth habit
- Proximity to property (shading issues)
- Existence of other trees on both private property and berms
- Attractiveness to bird feeding on a seasonal basis

In particular for streets, planting considerations include:

- Clear visibility of the roadway and footpath for vehicles, signs, pedestrians and cyclists.
- Safety for pedestrians and motorists.
- Free and unhindered access for utility authorities to access buried and overhead services. The utility authorities have statutory rights to locate their services in the street berm.

- Free and unhindered access to ensure effective drainage. Trees can take a lot of ground water and root systems may damage pavements and storm water channels and block pipelines.
- Free and unhindered access to minimise damage, uplift and potential hazards to pedestrians caused by tree roots.
- Maintain the effectiveness of road lighting.
- Effects of over-shading onto neighbouring properties and footpaths in winter months.
- Avoid leaf drop that may compromise safety or drainage.
- High wind areas which could result in large shrubs or trees being blown over.
- Potential impact on views.

In particular for gullies, planting considerations include:

- Stability of gully and watercourse within the gully
- Trees and vegetation that are able to provide erosion protection, and that convey ephemeral water drainage.
- Planting of trees are directed to gully sides, avoiding gully floors. Flaxes, grasses and shrubs are intermittently grouped on gully floors.
- Other council planning documents and design practice codes
- Potential or likely residential growth in the catchment.
- Advise neighbouring properties intention to plant the gully
- Removal of weed species in conjunction with the Regional Council Weed Pest officer.
- Identify trees and shrubs (if any) to be retained.
- Where the gully receives substantial drainage catchments, maintain a layer of vegetative matter on the surface of the ground, which will ensure storm flows traversing the gully are minimised.
- Gully plan developed for the restoration project, identifying planting, primary infrastructure within the gully, egress points from roading infrastructure, potential transportation links (e.g., recreational paths) that could be incorporated
- Initial area of gully (phase 1) identified and a community project or contractors are established to undertake clearance, and weed pest eradication
- Planting of large canopy type trees (phase 2), 2 years after phase 1 planting.

In particular for foreshore areas, planting considerations include:

- Selection of vegetation to improve slope stability and bind sediment together
- Enhancement of indigenous biodiversity and ecosystems and foreshore amenity.
- Treat stormwater and road runoff.
- Avoid taller specimen trees on the foreshore edge to minimise potential impact on erosion.
- Avoid vegetation that can exacerbate localised erosion such as willows.
- Limit public access to parts of the foreshore during establishment of new planting (as done in coastal sand dune systems)
- Other council planning documents and design practice codes

Policy 1.5 – Planting Near Boundaries on Council Land (excluding Road Reserve)

New trees on council land are planted at least five (5) metres from property boundaries.

Plantings on council land including parks, reserves, foreshore reserves and gullies (but excluding the road reserve) will be designed so that in maturity they do not impact significantly on adjoining properties, such as obstruction of views, leaf debris and shade.

New large growing species will be located a minimum of five metres away from adjoining property boundaries unless agreement has been reached with affected property owners, through consultation, to plant closer to boundaries.

Policy 1.6 – Street Tree Density within the Road Reserve

Where appropriate the general street tree density within the road reserve is;

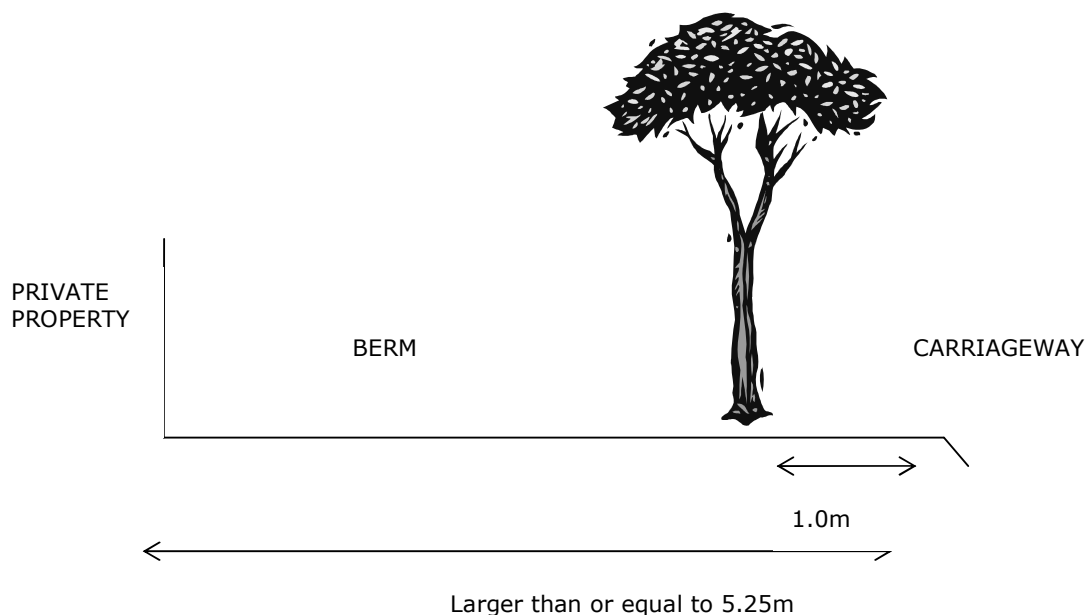
- residential berms at least 5.25m wide - one tree per road frontage, and
- low density residential berms – one tree per 30 metres of road frontage.

Council generally permits, in residential situations, one tree per property frontage to be planted on berms where the berm has a minimum 5.25m width (measured from private boundary to kerb edge). A suitable tree species will be identified by council staff. Trees will usually be planted at least 1m back from the kerb edge and no closer than 1m to underground services. Where the berm is less than 5.25m then the judgment of the Infrastructure Manager will be required to make a decision over the appropriateness of planting and species selection.

In rural areas as described in the District Plan, planting on the berm will not usually be encouraged; however consideration will be given to specific applications for planting on rural road berms. In some past situations where the Council has given consent for planting, the consent will continue to be respected.

In low density residential areas as described in the District Plan, one tree per 30 metres of property boundary will be considered, subject to the site being suitable in terms of services, sight lines and berm width. Other areas in the district such as industrial areas have specific planting requirements described in the District Plan. Refer to section 4 for consideration of other relevant information.

Figure 1: Suitable planting distances for trees on street berms



Policy 1.7 – Trees and Power Lines

Trees and vegetation are planted and managed to keep them away from utility lines.

At the time of writing this policy the overhead and underground power lines in the Taupō district are managed by Unison (central Taupō district), The Lines Company (Turangi, Western Bay, Mangakino) and telecommunication lines are generally managed by Telecom, Chorus, or Clear. These companies appreciate public co-operation in keeping trees away from their lines and therefore they have guidelines on how to deal with problem trees.

Trees and vegetation on council land are planted and managed by council to ensure the vegetation is kept clear of the power lines, in accordance with the Schedule Growth Limit Zones printed in the Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations 2003, and or any future amendments to the regulations.

Policy 1.8 – Street and Reserve Amenity Tree Replacement

Established street and reserve amenity trees that are removed will be replaced in a similar location if suitable, subject to funding.

Council is aware that there have been many cases of inappropriate trees being planted on council land over the years. In some situations, trees have been planted in an ad hoc way whilst others have been well planted as part of an overall, planned, planting programme.

Where established trees have died or are to be removed, they will be replaced in a suitable location with an appropriate tree species. The new tree may not be the same species as the removed tree. Where recently established trees are to be replaced, for instance due to being sick, dying, diseased, or vandalised, they will be replaced with similar species where possible. Replacement planting will take into account the requirements of any adopted reserve management plan or adopted tree-planting plan for the reserve.

Policy 1.9 – Donated Trees and Sponsored Trees

Donated and sponsored trees will be considered for planting on council land.

Council will consider donated and sponsored trees if in the view of an arborist, they are likely to survive and thrive in the new location, are considered to be an appropriate species, and an instant impact of scale is required. As newly planted young trees usually establish more quickly than larger transplanted ones, trees with a base trunk diameter of more than 100mm will not generally be considered for relocation at council's cost. Careful after care of large transplanted trees is required, particularly irrigation over summer months.

Occasionally individuals, groups or organisations may offer to sponsor tree planting in reserves. Partnerships with the community are valued by council and will be encouraged, as long as the proposed planting is considered appropriate for the location, and in keeping with this policy.

Occasionally requests are received to establish trees and gardens in various reserves and public areas to commemorate special events and deceased people. Consideration of memorial trees on Council land will be in accordance with council's commemorative guideline.

Policy 1.10 – Tree Planting Programmes

Community plantings on council land are supported subject to council approval.

Council recognises and supports the long term environment and community benefits from organised community planting projects subject to council approval. Council also works with our partners encouraging community planting projects, including the Department of Conservation (DOC), Waikato Regional Council, and Greening Taupō. DOC has established an annual week, where revegetation plantings are encouraged on public land. Greening Taupō seeks to improve the Taupō environment for people and native wildlife and will involve undertaking restoration planting and pest control to create ecological corridors and increase the number of native birds.

Objective 2 – Management of Trees and Vegetation

To appropriately manage trees and vegetation on council land.

Objective 2 outlines the goal for the Taupō District Council to appropriately manage its trees and vegetation on council land. Trees and vegetation have on-going costs and care requirements that extend beyond the planting of the trees. Objective 2 and its policies seek to ensure that council maintains its trees and vegetation appropriately within budget commitments and with a clear process.

Policy 2.1 – Routine Maintenance

Trees and vegetation on council land are regularly inspected, maintained and pruned by suitably qualified council staff or approved contractors.

Council arborists will inspect and undertake routine maintenance of trees and vegetation in accordance with the Parks Asset Management Plan.

Council staff in conjunction with an arborist, assumes the responsibility to make decisions with regard to tree maintenance and removal on rural and urban road berms. Arborist advice is sought for recommendations on maintenance, street tree issues relating to views, services, tree health and appropriateness of particular trees. Where necessary tree removal requests may be referred to Council's elected members for a decision (refer to policies in section 3). Where residents are affected by leaf fall from deciduous council trees, such as in Turangi, council will consider assistance to remove fallen leaves.

NZ Transport Agency is responsible for the management, operation and maintenance of the state highway network; however trees and vegetation within the urban portion of state highways is managed by council.

Policy 2.2 – Non-Routine Maintenance

Requests for non routine maintenance, thinning or pruning that is approved by council but not deemed to be essential may be undertaken by council or approved contractors, on the basis that the requester meets at least 50% of the cost.

The Taupō District Council wishes to be a good neighbour in terms of maintenance of its trees and vegetation, but does not prune trees to enhance views. Policy 2.2 is intended to enable requesters to have council approved non-routine and non-urgent maintenance undertaken sooner, if the council is unable to deliver the service immediately. Council staff undertakes routine maintenance to a programme, and may not have the capacity to undertake non-routine or non-urgent requests immediately. Where requests for non-routine maintenance are approved, but cannot be undertaken by council staff immediately, the policy allows the requester to either pay for a council approved arborist to undertake the work, or contribute the additional cost required by council to undertake the work. In this instance requesters will be asked to meet at least 50% of the costs.

Reasons for Council undertaking non-routine maintenance on council trees may include:

- trees interfering with house aerial antenna reception,
- minor interference with pedestrian, or vehicle access
- non-urgent broken branches or damaged trees
- minor damage from branches on private property.

Policy 2.3 – Pruning Techniques

Trees are encouraged to grow true to form, are pruned to established horticultural or arboricultural standards, and will not be topped.

Tree pruning is a skilled operation therefore to ensure the long term health of trees it will only be carried out by experienced council arboricultural operators or contractors. Shrub pruning will be carried out by horticultural staff / contractors. The Taupō District Council supports the principle of trees and vegetation being encouraged to grow true to form, where they are the appropriate species for the location.

Trees will be maintained in keeping with established arboricultural standards. The topping of trees will not be undertaken, unless in the opinion of an arborist there is no other appropriate pruning that can be undertaken to overcome the weakness that earlier topping is likely to have created. Council's arborist will consider the removal and replacement of previously topped trees in the longer term (refer policies for tree removal in section 3 and replacement planting in section 1).

Policy 2.4 – Encroachment of Trees and Vegetation

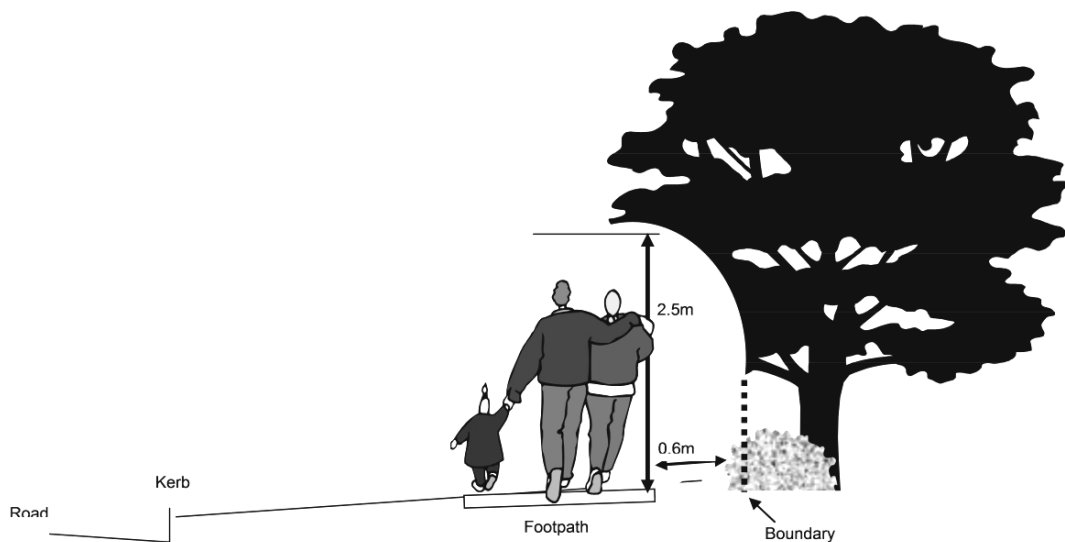
Encroaching private trees and vegetation on council land may be removed in accordance with the Taupō District Council General Bylaw No. 2008, latest amendment..

Council may remove trees and vegetation encroaching over council infrastructure such as roads, footpaths, or other services. Council will also manage its trees that may have an effect on the supply of electricity when growing under or near powerlines, in accordance with the Schedule Growth Limit Zones printed in the Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations 2003.

Initially a letter will be issued requesting that the property owner undertake appropriate action for the encroaching tree or vegetation. Where the problem continues, enforcement action may be taken.

Occasionally a private tree may become dangerous, for example in a storm, and in these situations urgent action may be required. Under the Local Government Act 2002, on the recommendation of council staff, council may take remedial action to negate an urgent danger either with or without the tree owners consent.

Figure 2: Minimum clearance for trees on private property adjacent to footpaths.



Policy 2.5 – Berm Vegetation Management

Residents are responsible for the lawn maintenance of the council berm adjoining their property.

Residents are responsible for the lawn maintenance of the council berm adjoining their property. No planting or modification of the berm is to occur without the prior consent of the council in accordance with General Bylaw No. 1 2008 (amended 2013).

Where a resident does not maintain the berm outside their property council staff may undertake or contract basic maintenance to avoid a fire or health risk occurring. An un-maintained berm lawn is likely to receive two grass cuts per year in this situation.

Vehicles are not allowed to park on berms in accordance with the council's Traffic Bylaw 2008, section 7.1.

Policy 2.6 – Gully Vegetation Management

Gully vegetation is maintained to ensure stormwater drainage disposal and conveyance characteristics are maintained without destabilising gully areas.

Council manages gullies for primary stormwater drainage disposal and conveyance. Council also manages gullies to ensure their natural geological and geographical character is not compromised, their amenity and recreational values are enhanced and that they provide an ecological and biological balance within the urban environment.

Council will manage gully vegetation to:

- ensure stormwater drainage and conveyance characteristics are maintained/optimised
- ensure primary stormwater drainage operations can continue
- provide safe, attractive recreational paths for recreation
- eradicate noxious weed, trees and shrubs from the gully areas
- provide habitat for flora that encourages bird, insect and other wildlife

Policy 2.7 – Foreshore Vegetation Management

Vegetation on council land within the foreshore of rivers and Lake Taupo is managed to reduce the impact of foreshore erosion.

Parts of the foreshore are susceptible to erosion. This erosion tends to occur irregularly and is related to severe weather events. Once exposed, foreshore areas can become increasingly vulnerable to successive erosion events. There is a range of ways that Council can respond to this erosion risk. For the lake foreshore, the Lake Taupō Erosion and Flood Strategy (2009) emphasises that the favoured approach is to use more natural options like beach replenishment and revegetation. The strategy highlights a series of principles which include respecting the natural river and catchment processes and promoting the protection of natural defences.

The planting of vegetation along the edge of the foreshore can be an effective part of the overall strategy to mitigate the erosion risks by creating natural defences. Vegetation can improve the slope stability and bind sediment together; it also has other benefits such as contributing to the enhancement of ecosystems, and the treatment of stormwater and road runoff. When planting is well planned and managed it can significantly enhance the amenity for foreshore areas for all users.

The use of vegetation to help manage the risks of foreshore erosion can potentially impact on the use of the foreshore area. To protect planted areas it may be necessary to limit access to parts of the foreshore much like access through dunes systems on the coast has become an accepted management practice. Taller specimen trees are likely to be appropriate further back from the foreshore edge where they can provide amenity and shade without potentially impacting on erosion of the foreshore, considering other policies within this document on species selection (policy 1.4) and planting near boundaries (policy 1.5).

Council will manage vegetation along the foreshores of Lake Taupō to:

- Help protect the foreshore from erosion
- Contribute to indigenous biodiversity and enhance ecosystems
- Avoid vegetation that can exacerbate localised erosion such as willows creating natural groynes.

Policy 2.8 – Tree Stumps and Tree Suckers

Tree stumps are removed by stump grinding, with tree suckers from existing established trees to be removed by hand and not treated with weed killers.

When trees are removed it is preferable to remove tree stumps from the urban environment, although it is not always possible due to cost and location. Where tree stumps can be removed, the preferred method is to grind the remaining stump and remove the chippings from site.

Tree stumps that remain in ground can often develop tree suckers. Dependent on the species of tree the suckers may quickly become a new problem, causing damage to hard surfaces especially. In hard surface areas tree suckers will be treated with weed killer. In large grass areas constant mowing will gradually reduce vigour over a period of years.

Policy 2.9 – Management of Noxious Weeds

Council will manage noxious weeds on council land in accordance with Regional Council Weed Pest controls.

Identification of noxious weed control will be undertaken by an experienced parks officer in conjunction with advice from Regional Council Weed Pest Managers. Care is required when removing weed trees or vegetation that provide habitat to native flora (such as mistletoe) and fauna (such as native birds and bats). Clearing of weeds in the gully areas will be undertaken as and when resources allow or as drainage asset maintenance is required. Spraying is undertaken in accordance with council's policy on management of pests; "Taupō District Council Management of Plant Pests, Unwanted Fungi, and Unwanted Insects as they Pertain to Vegetation on Council-Owned Property Policy – May 2009". Weed trees and vegetation on council land may also be removed as required.

Policy 2.10 – Adornment of Trees

Structures, signs, lighting or other adornments may be permitted on council trees, subject to the approval from council to ensure safety of the public and trees.

Generally adornment of trees is discouraged. Trees may occasionally be adorned with structures, signs and lights to provide seasonal or festive colour, subject to council approval. In the case of lights the wiring and installation is to be carried out by appropriately qualified contractors.

Policy 2.11 – Trees and Vegetation on Private Land

Maintenance of trees on private land is the responsibility of the land owner, within the provisions of the Taupō District Plan.

While responsible for trees on land it owns or manages Council is not responsible for trees on private property. However there are instances where the District Plan has specific requirements for the provision of or maintenance of trees on private land and any requirements must be taken into account.

In general terms Council will not be involved in privately owned tree issues - with the following exceptions:

- District Plan requirements (for example but not limited to: rural, industrial, town centre planting requirements, significant natural areas, notable and amenity trees, or trees and vegetation covenanted as part of a resource consent condition) or other statutory provisions.
- Trees interfering with public footpaths, roadways, road signs, and in some situations services
- Where trees may have been planted on Council owned land without prior consent or agreement

Policy 2.12 – Protected Trees and Vegetation

Management of formally protected trees and vegetation is subject to the provisions and terms of their protection.

Various trees and vegetation within the Taupō District and on council land are formally protected above this policy. The provisions of formal protection take precedence above this policy. Proposed activities such as removal or modification to or within the locality of the trees and vegetation is subject to their formal protection provisions.

The Taupō District Plan contains specific rules, policies and objectives relating to activities to protected trees (notable and amenity trees) and protected vegetation (significant natural areas). Notable and amenity trees and significant natural areas are identified on both private and public land. They are mapped in the Taupō District Plan and require a formal process under the Resource Management Act 1991 for inclusion into the district plan. Notable and amenity trees may be native or exotic individual or groups of trees that contribute to the amenity and character of an area. Significant natural areas are mainly indigenous bush and forest areas, but also include wetlands and geothermal sites with ecological value. The Waikato Regional Plan also contains relevant provisions to consider relating to wetland and geothermal vegetation.

Some trees and vegetation may also be subject to a covenant or other protection, such as a resource consent covenant, Queen Elizabeth II and Nga Whenua Rahui covenant, or the vegetation may be protected through reserve status such as scenic or scientific reserve.

It is important to check the protection status of the vegetation prior to determining whether or not removal is suitable under this policy. Refer to section 4 of this policy to check if other factors need to be considered in the removal of trees.

Objective 3 – Tree Removal

To retain trees on council land with their removal being the exception, and decisions to remove trees to follow a consistent process.

Objective 3 provides the direction that trees on council land will be retained and only removed due to exceptional reasons. Trees may require removal for various reasons. Council follows a clear process and the policies provide guidance on how that can be achieved.

Policy 3.1 – Removal of Unhealthy Trees

A tree on council land may be removed by council staff where in the opinion of a qualified arborist the tree is:

- dead,
- dangerous,
- severely diseased, or
- particularly poor form and provides limited amenity value.

Trees on council land that are unhealthy and present a hazard to public or private property may be removed to eliminate any danger or threat that they pose. Council's arborist will determine the most appropriate action required.

Where an unhealthy tree is removed, a replacement of the tree will be considered to address any adverse impacts on the environment from removal of the tree. See policies on tree replacement in section 1, tree stump removal in section 2, and policies on conflict of opinion on removal of trees, and notification of tree removal in section 3.

Policy 3.2 – Removal of Healthy Trees

Healthy trees on council land will be retained, and their removal will be the exception. Instances where council may consider removal of a healthy tree include:

- street redevelopment is to be implemented and options to retain the tree have been investigated and discounted,
- severe hardship is being experienced (trees which inhibit views or drop debris are not considered to be causing severe hardship),
- other community assets are impacted by trees or vegetation,
- the trees or vegetation are grown weeds and not intentionally planted, or
- the removal is part of a planned replacement programme.

Council recognises that the urban environment is a place where people, services and infrastructure are in higher concentrations, and the ability for large trees to grow true to form can be limiting. In some instances trees can cause hardship to people, property and services. In some situations inappropriate trees have been established which may have contributed to difficulties people are experiencing.

Consideration of healthy tree removal may include:

- Extent of damage if any caused to council assets, services
- Level of impact on adjoining property or persons (applicant to show evidence of impact/effects)
- Any particular values associated with the trees or vegetation
- Degree of safety compromised, if any, by the tree or vegetation
- Cost of tree removal and replacement

The council tree assessment checklist should be completed where a tree is under consideration for removal or is causing problems. A copy of the standard assessment form is attached in appendix 1. Where a tree is to be removed a photograph showing the condition of the tree will usually be taken for historical purposes. It is important to check first whether the tree or vegetation is formally protected by a covenant or by the District Plan or reserve status – see policy on protected trees and vegetation in section 3.

Where it is determined that the otherwise healthy tree is no longer appropriate for the location, a replacement of the tree will be considered to address any adverse impacts on the environment from removal of the tree - see policies in section 2 on tree stump removal and tree replacement. See also policies on major tree removal and conflict of opinion, and notification of tree removal in section 3.

Policy 3.3 – Major Tree Removal and Conflict of Opinion

Tree removal that involves unresolved conflict of opinion, or has the potential to significantly reduce the amenity and character of the location, will be referred to the elected members of Council to decide.

When an appropriate course of action to remove a tree is not found, it will be referred to council's elected members for a decision.

In the case of a disputed tree removal the following process will be undertaken:

- A thorough investigation and inspection will be undertaken by council staff and the tree assessment form (appendix 1) will be completed.
- Appropriate consultation undertaken
- Appropriate remedial work will be carried out in compliance with sound arboricultural practices (the costs of which may be shared between the parties or at the cost of the complainant)
- Should remedial work not be deemed to be satisfactory, then removal of the tree will be considered by the council staff as per policy.
- Mediation will be implemented prior to elected member's consideration
- If no agreement is reached, then the issue may be referred to council's elected members for a decision.

Policy 3.4 – Lessees or Occupiers of Council Land

Lessees or occupiers of Council Land must in the first instance notify the Council should they wish to undertake any tree removal or major tree pruning.

The Council will inspect trees with lessees and occupiers and agree on appropriate work to be undertaken. The cost of completing tree pruning and removal will be agreed between council officers and lessee, where not specified in terms of existing lease or occupation agreement.

Policy 3.5 – Notification of Tree Removal

Decisions to remove trees and reasons for removal will be notified to the public, using the most appropriate method for the situation.

Decisions to remove trees and the reasons to do so will be appropriately notified and may include:

- Notification to surrounding neighbours, and /or reserve users
- Media release – these also appear on council's website
- Public notice if required

Notification may include information on any plans to make tree replacements.

Policy 3.6 – Tree Vandalism and Wilful Damage

Unlawful removal of trees including deliberate damage or vandalism is investigated by Council's compliance officers, and guilty persons are liable for prosecution.

Occasionally, trees on public land are deliberate targets of vandalism which includes poisoning, breaking of tree limbs and damage to tree bark. Council compliance officers will investigate complaints of damage to trees on Council land and to trees and vegetation that are formally protected under Taupō District Council provisions. Enforcement and reparation will be sought by the Council where persons responsible are identified.

Objective 4 – Relevant Information Guide

To provide a guide to the relevant information to be considered when managing trees and vegetation on council land.

Objective 4 provides guidance to other relevant documents or statutes considered when managing trees on council land. The relevant provisions to be taken into account include (but are not limited to):

- Local Government Act 2002;
- Taupō District Plan and Resource Management Act 1991;
- Taupō District Council Code of Practice for Development of Land 2009;
- Council Bylaws;
- Regional Council and Department of Conservation provisions
- Property Law Act 2007;
- Strategies and Management Plans, e.g. biodiversity strategies and Lake Taupō Erosion and Flood strategy;
- Reserves Act 1977, and Reserve Status;
- Electricity Distribution Businesses, Transport and Communications Company regulations;
- National Environmental Standards;
- Litter Act 1979
- Relevant iwi information, for example; Ngati Tuwharetoa Environmental Iwi Management Plan 2003, and joint strategies and agreements, for example; Joint Management Agreements, 2020 Taupō-nui-ā-Tia Action Plan .

Taupō District Plan and Code of Practice

The provisions of the Taupō District Plan may require trees and vegetation to be planted or managed in a particular way as part of a consent or development process. For example, there are requirements for boundary planting within rural areas and some industrial areas, and covenanted vegetation as part of a subdivision or development approval.

The Taupō District Code of Practice for Development of Land outlines minimum requirements for development matters, on some of which trees and vegetation may have an impact – for example, vehicle sight lines, overhead and underground services, street tree distances. The planting or on-going establishment of trees and vegetation must ensure that the minimum requirements of the Code of Practice are not compromised.

Taupō District Council Bylaws

Taupō District Council bylaws address issues relating to trees and vegetation, and where relevant must be adhered to. The relevant bylaws cover issues such as:

- Dumping of garden waste (also covered by the Litter Act)
- Unauthorised objects on council land – General Bylaw
- Encroachment onto council land – General Bylaw
- Vehicles on berms (damage to grass) – Traffic Bylaw

Local Government Act

The Local Government Act 2002 provides that councils meet the current and future needs of communities for good-quality local infrastructure, and local public services. Tree and vegetation management therefore needs to be cognisant of potential impacts on local infrastructure and services.

Section 183 contains a provisions relating to removal of fire hazards.

Relevant Iwi Information

Plans such as the Ngati Tuwharetoa Environmental Iwi Management Plan 2003, and 2020 Taupō-nui-ā-Tia Action Plan, contain actions and goals for iwi and council to work towards achieving. For instance, the Iwi Management Plan notes an issue under ‘Land’ as; “limited involvement from tangata whenua with regard to the management of reserves, recreation areas”. Methods include promoting and supporting the practice of erosion control that is consistent with Tūwharetoa tikanga and kawa. Relevant consideration of these documents should be undertaken, with further consultation with iwi as required.

Reserves Act, Reserve Management Plans, and Parks Asset Management Plan

The Reserves Act 1977 contains various protection requirements for reserve status, such as scenic - which may protect vegetation that contributes to the scenic nature of the reserve, or scientific - which may protect rare or endangered species. The provisions of the Reserves Act and Reserve Management Plans take precedence over this policy. Of relevance to Taupō, sections 19 and 20 Nature and Scenic reserves – contain provisions on protection of trees and vegetation in accordance with the purpose of their reserve status, Section 42 - protects trees or bush from cutting or destruction unless necessary for the proper management of the reserve, safety or harvesting; Section 94 – identifies offences relating to reserve tree and other vegetation.

The parks asset management plan is the tool for combining management, financial, engineering and technical practices to ensure that the level of service required by customers is provided at the lowest long term cost to the community.

Property Law Act

The Property Law Act 2007 sections 332 to 338 contain provisions and processes to resolve issues relating to trees including view blockage, undue hardship to a complainant's land for reasons of leaf fall, branches, roots, shade, and interference to light. Section 333 outlines reasons for an applicant to apply for an order to remove or trim trees, section 335 outlines matters that the court may consider in making its decision. Section 336 outlines the matters of public interest that the court must have regard to in making a decision.

Regional Council and Department of Conservation Provisions

Regional councils have provisions that have relevance to the way in which council maintains its trees and vegetation on council land. The Taupō District falls under four Regional Councils – Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Hawkes Bay, and a small portion of Horizons. Relevant provisions include: regional plans and policy statements, pest management strategies.

Department of Conservation (DoC) is responsible for managing all conservation land using Conservation Management Plans. There are instances where council will maintain and mow grass within DoC reserves where they are located adjacent to council reserves. This is done in order to maintain continuity, amenity value, and where appropriate, access. Council will continue to work with DoC when managing grass on DoC reserves.

Transport, Communications, Electricity Regulations

Transportation, communications and electricity providers have safety regulations regarding trees and vegetation. In all instances the regulations and provisions of these services must be adhered to. The Government Road Powers Act 1989 No75, Sections 55 and 57, and Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations 2003 contain provisions relating to the planting and management of trees and vegetation.

At the time of writing this policy contact phone numbers for the overhead and underground utilities in the Taupō district are;

- **Unison – 0800 2 UNISON, 0800 2 864 766** (power central Taupō District),
- **The Lines Company – 0800 367 546** (power Turangi, Western Bay, Mangakino)
- **Telecom – 0800 800 123** (telecommunications residential)
- **Chorus – 0800 4 NETWORK, 0800 463 896** (telecommunications)
- **Vodafone / TelstraClear – 0508 888 800** (telecommunications customer care and faults).

Illegal Dumping of Waste on Council Land

Dumping of garden waste in council reserves is a breach of the Reserves Act 1977 and Litter Act 1979 as appropriate, and is not permitted. Gullies and significant natural areas within council land are particularly prone to illegal dumping of waste. Such actions will be treated as a statutory or bylaw breach and dealt with by council accordingly. Dumped garden waste can lead to establishment of weeds, unwanted trees and vegetation and possible rodent infestation. The Taupō District Council intends that council gullies and significant natural areas are managed to ensure their natural geological and geographical character is not compromised; their amenity and recreational values are enhanced.

Appendix 1 - Council Tree Assessment Checklist

(Note: for provisions relating to notable and amenity trees and trees and indigenous trees and vegetation within significant natural areas – refer to the Taupō District Plan)

Location

Tree Species

Girth

Height

Spread

Approximate Age

Tree Health/Condition (1 excellent – 5 very poor)

Berm Width

1	<u>Roadway Damage Assessment</u>	
1.1	Footpath damage	Yes/No
1.2	Has the footpath been replaced	Yes/No
1.3	Kerb & channel damaged	Yes/No
1.4	Road pavement damage	Yes/No
1.5	Buried services damaged	Yes/No

2	<u>Adjoining Property Impact Assessment</u>	
2.1	What side of the property is tree on	North/South/East/West
2.2	Is tree over shading the property in winter	Yes/No
2.3	Is tree damaging the property	Yes/No
2.4	Comment on tree damage	

2.5	Is tree a danger to the property if it falls	Yes/No
2.6	Do the adjoining owners want the tree removed	Yes/No
2.7	Is the tree encroaching on power lines	Yes/No
2.8	Is the tree adversely impacting on adjoining services e.g. footpaths, roads, underground services	Yes/No
2.9	Is there erosion potential if the tree is removed?	Yes/No

3 Values and Options Assessment

- 3.1 Does the tree have formal protection e.g. District Plan, Reserve Act, Covenant Yes/No
- 3.2 Has the tree historic or other significance Yes/No
- 3.3 Can the tree be pruned to overcome the current problem Yes/No
- 3.4 What is the frequency of trees on the street

- 3.5 Are there mature trees in private gardens, parks or street berms adjoining this site Yes/No

- 3.6 How significant is the tree in the local landscape

4 Proposed Action

- 4.1 What species of tree is a suitable replacement?

- 4.2 Do you recommend the removal of the tree Yes/No
- 4.3 Do you recommend the replacement of the tree Yes/No
- 4.4 Can work be safely completed near power lines or is Power Authority Consent required Yes/No
- 4.5 General comment:

- 4.6 Photos taken? (attach photos) Yes/No

Parks Officer Name _____ Date _____

Appendix 2 – Glossary

Amenity Values

Natural or physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contribute to people's appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence, and cultural and recreational attributes.

Arborist (Qualified)

A professional tradesperson with a recognised arboricultural degree, diploma or certificate; and relevant practical experience.

Berm (Road Berm)

The part of the road property between the back of the kerb line and the boundary of the adjacent properties. Generally grass covered in urban areas with a footpath, and either grass or bush covered in rural areas.

Biodiversity or Biological Diversity

The variety and diversity of all life on land, in fresh water and in the sea, including the places or ecosystems where they live and the genes they contain.

Character

The combination of qualities which make an area unique or distinctive; these the landscape type, dominance of vegetation, the absence or subservience of man-made structures, and the type of structures.

Council Elected Member

A member of the governing body of the council elected under the Local Electoral Act 2001, including the Mayor and Councillors.

Council Staff

A person employed by the council to perform council's duties and functions, and also referred to as a council officer.

Deciduous Tree

A tree, which in autumn, the leaves will start falling until the tree shows bare branches, and it will remain so until new leaves emerge in spring.

Ecological Processes, Ecosystems

The relationship of organisms (plants or animals) to their natural or developed environment, and the processes that occur.

Environment

The same meaning as in the Resource Management Act 1991.

Ephemeral Water

Streams or waterways that flow continuously for at least three months between March and September but do not flow all year.

Erosion

The removal of material which has often already been weathered. The key agents are rivers, moving ice (glaciation) and the sea.

Exotic Trees and Vegetation

Trees and vegetation of foreign origin, which have been introduced and are not occurring in their natural environment. They are not native, indigenous or endemic to the location.

Fauna

The animal life of any particular region or time.

Flora

The plant life of any particular region or time.

Foreshore

A strip of land margining a body of water; the part of a shore that lies between the highest and lowest watermarks.

Geothermal feature/site

A surface manifestation of geothermal processes or discharges; includes steam-fed features, geothermal water-fed features and remnant features such as hydrothermal eruption craters and ancient sinters.

Gully

A channel or small valley, especially one carved out by persistent heavy rainfall. May be used for natural storm water drainage in urban areas.

Habitat

The natural conditions and environment in which a plant or animal lives.

Indigenous, or Native Trees and Vegetation

Trees and vegetation native to or occurring naturally in New Zealand as opposed to being introduced or exotic.

Iwi

Māori group or tribe.

Landscape

The visible features of an area of land, including the physical elements of landforms such as mountains, hills, water bodies such as rivers, lakes, ponds and the sea, living elements of land cover including vegetation, human elements including different forms of land use, buildings and structures, and transitory elements such as lighting and weather conditions.

Native Wildlife

Animal life that is naturally occurring in a particular location, as opposed to being introduced.

Natural Features

Any occurrence that does not have any human intervention in its process, such as rivers, lakes, waterfalls, and mountains.

Obstruction of Views

The total blocking of the view, as opposed to a disrupted view

Protected Trees and Vegetation

Trees and vegetation formally and legally protected. In the Taupō District this includes; Significant Natural Areas, Notable and Amenity Trees, QEII covenants, Nga Whenua Rahui, consented mitigation planting or conditions of subdivision and development.

Pruning

A horticultural and silvicultural practice involving the selective removal of parts of a tree, such as branches, buds, or roots.

Street and Reserve Amenity Trees

Trees planted for the purposes of providing amenity value, as opposed to trees planted solely for production purposes.

Tangata Whenua

Indigenous people of the land.

Tikanga and Kawa

Procedure and protocol.

Topping of Trees

Removing whole tops of trees or large branches and/or trunks from the tops of trees, leaving stubs or lateral branches that are too small to assume the role of a terminal leader.

Tree Stock

The amount of trees currently planted on council land.

True to Form

Growth that is allowed to occur to its natural form and growth pattern.

Weed

An unwanted plant, especially a wild plant, growing where it is not wanted. In this policy; does not include indigenous or native trees and vegetation.

Wetland

A permanent or intermittently wet area, shallow water, and land/water margins that support a natural ecosystem of plants and animals that are adapted to wet conditions.