

Field Guide to the Community Tree Management Ordinance

Published By:
Athens-Clarke County Planning Department
Athens-Clarke County Central Services Department

Athens-Clarke County, Georgia
5/1/2008

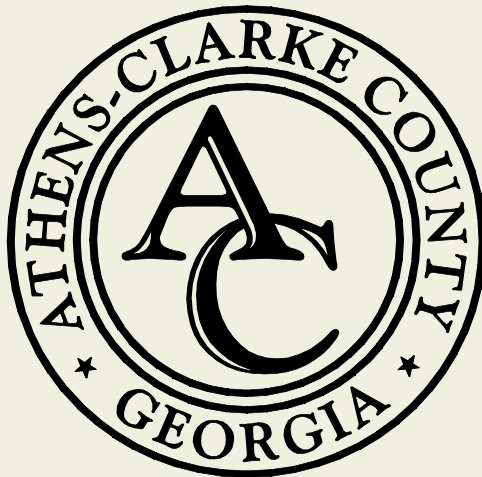
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Introduction

The Athens-Clarke County Community Tree Management Ordinance was passed in June of 2005 and went into effect September 1, 2005. This Guide provides useful information for implementing the Ordinance in a quality and cost-effective manner. This guide is not intended to be a replacement for the actual ordinance. Please consult the Community Tree Management Ordinance for further clarification.

The Community Tree Management Ordinance is administered by the Landscape Management Division, Central Services Department, except provisions related to land development, which are administered by the Planning Department.



The Athens-Clarke County Community
Tree Management Ordinance
can be found online at
www.accgov.com/273/Tree-Ordinance



Contact Information



Community Forestry Coordinator



The Community Forestry Coordinator oversees the Community Tree Program. The Community Tree Program was established to professionally manage and proactively conserve tree resources for the enhancement of the quality of life in Athens-Clarke County. The Community Forestry Coordinator provides technical assistance to Athens-Clarke County residents upon request. All right-of-way trees are under the care of the Community Forestry Coordinator.


Community Forestry Coordinator
Landscape Management Division
2555 Lexington Hwy
Athens, GA 30605
(762) 400-7519 voice
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Mateo.Fennell@accgov.com

Arborist


The Athens-Clarke County Arborist works within the Planning Department to provide technical assistance and site inspections for the development community for the purpose of satisfying the provisions of the Community Tree Management Ordinance. The Arborist oversees privately-owned trees on new developments.

Athens-Clarke County Arborist
Planning Department
120 W. Dougherty Street
Athens, GA 30601
(706) 613-3515 voice
(706) 613-3844 fax
Wick.Prichard@accgov.com





Types of Trees



Privately-Owned Trees Any tree— not classified as a protected tree—that has at least 51% of its trunk on privately held property. Developers may manage these trees as they wish as long as they meet the requirements of the Community Tree Management Ordinance. These trees may be conserved for canopy credit.

Athens-Clarke County Trees Any tree that has at least 51% of its trunk on Athens-Clarke County property. These trees are protected trees. The Community Forestry Coordinator is responsible for all management decisions related to these trees. These trees may be conserved for canopy credit.

Protected Trees Athens-Clarke County Trees, Landmark Trees, and trees on private property that have been conserved or planted to meet the code requirements of Athens-Clarke County. Trees on single family residential lots are excluded. Protected tree management actions must comply with the ANSI A300 standards. Removals are not permitted unless authorized by the Landscape Management Division Administrator.

Landmark Trees A Landmark Tree meets one or more of the following criteria: older than 50 years of age, greater than a specified diameter according to its canopy class, a member of the Champion Tree Program, a unique or rare species, part of a larger neighborhood-wide planting, or planted during a community celebration or in honor of an individual event.

Landmark Trees can be privately or publicly owned trees. They are eligible for 1.5X canopy credit when conserved during development. An official application must be approved by the Community Forestry Coordinator to receive Landmark Tree status.

Canopy Cover

Canopy Cover Requirements

- ◆ New developments and existing developments that add improvements or are required to have a land disturbance activity permit must provide a minimum amount of canopy cover on the site.
- ◆ The amount of canopy cover required varies depending on the zoning district.
- ◆ A portion of the canopy cover must be attributed to tree conservation during development.

Canopy Cover is Not Required On...

- Existing, single family residential properties
- Properties zoned AR or CD

Tree Conservation is Not Required On...

- Lots less than 12,500 square ft.
- Lots in RS-5 or RS-8 subdivisions
- Industrially zoned properties

Amount and Location

- ◆ Canopy is calculated by adding the actual canopy area of forested areas to the actual or minimum canopy areas of individually conserved or planted trees.
- ◆ Tree canopy must be evenly distributed throughout the site.

Alternatives to Tree Conservation

Under certain circumstances, the Planning Department may waive tree conservation requirements. Alternatives that may qualify for a waiver to tree conservation include the following:

- *Forest regeneration areas*
- *Future forest areas*
- *Additional planted trees*

Parking Lot Trees

Requirements

- ◆ At least one tree for each 7 parking spaces; lots of fewer than 10 spaces may plant the trees around the perimeter.
- ◆ Trees may not be planted farther than 10 feet from or closer than 3 feet to the edge of the parking pavement.
- ◆ Only large canopy trees may be used on perimeter plantings.
- ◆ The landscaped area must include the minimum open soil surface area required for the canopy size selected in the *Athens-Clarke County Tree Species List*.
- ◆ Interior planting strips shall have a minimum width of 9 feet.
- ◆ Where double parking is utilized, a 36-foot-long island may plant 1 large canopy tree or 2 medium canopy trees.
- ◆ Perimeter planting strips must have a minimum width of 7 feet.
- ◆ Trees must be evenly distributed throughout the parking lot.
- ◆ No more than 14 contiguous parking spaces are allowed without a minimum of 1 landscape island or peninsula.
- ◆ Trees must be at least 2 inches in caliper to qualify.

Preferred Parking Lot Species

Blackgum/Tupelo
Downy Serviceberry
Oak, Southern Red
Oak, Overcup
Oak, Northern Red
Oak, Shumard
Oak, Willow
Elm, Winged
Elm, American "Princeton"
Hornbeam, European
Maple, Trident
Pine, Loblolly
Planetree, London
Crapemyrtle, Common

Suitable Parking Lot Spe-

Ash, Green
Baldcypress
Birch, River
Blackgum
Buckthorn, Carolina
Buckthorn, Common
Cottonwood, Eastern
Ginkgo (male)
Hollies
Hornbeam, American
Magnolia, Sweetbay
Maple, Chalk
Maple, Florida
Maple, Hedge
Maple, Sugar
Oak, Black
Oak, Laurel
Oak, Northern Red
Oak, Nuttall
Oak, Overcup
Oak, Scarlet
Oak, Southern Red
Pine, Longleaf
Pine, Shortleaf
Pine, Slash
Pine, Virginia
Poplar, Tulip
Redcedar, Eastern
Silverbell, Carolina
Sourwood
Sycamore, American

Streetscape Trees

Requirements

- ◆ One tree is required for every 30 feet of road frontage.
- ◆ Trees may be planted on the right-of-way or within 5 feet of the lot line.
- ◆ Trees must be at least 35 feet from an intersection.
- ◆ Trees may not be planted in violation of any of the minimum prescribed distances found in the chart below.

Minimum Distances in Feet Required between Trees and Structures or Infrastructure by Tree Canopy Size Category				
Infrastructure Description	Tree Canopy Size Category from the Athens-Clarke County Tree Species List			
	Large	Medium	Small	Very Small
<i>Street intersections</i>	35	35	35	35
<i>Traffic signs</i>	20	20	20	20
<i>Light poles</i>	20	20	15	15
<i>Overhead utility lines</i>	30	20	0	0
<i>Underground utility lines</i>	5	5	5	5
<i>Mailboxes</i>	5	5	5	5
<i>Fire hydrants, water meters, or other similar structures</i>	5	5	5	5
<i>Sidewalk, or pavement edge</i>	2	2	1.5	1.5
<i>Buildings</i>	15	10	5	5

Prohibited Streetscape Species

Catalpa, Southern

Cypress, Leyland

Hickories

Laurelcherry, Carolina

Mulberry, Red

Oak, Chestnut

Oak, Sawtooth

Oak, Swamp Chestnut

Orange, Osage

Paulownia, Royal

Persimmon, Common

Plum, Chickasaw

Sweetgum

Walnut, Black

Willows

Tree Management Plans

- ◆ Tree Management Plans must show the amount, location, and type of canopy cover currently existing on site.
- ◆ An approved Tree Management Plan must exist prior to the issuance of a building permit, a site review permit, or a land disturbance permit.

Items Required on a Tree Management Plan

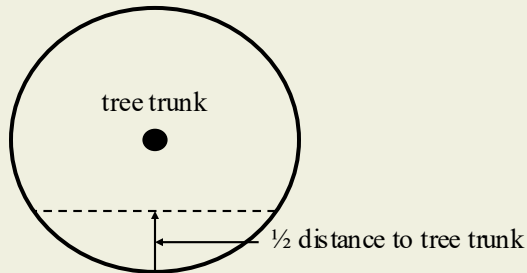
- Existing and proposed utilities
- Proposed structures/hardscape
- Existing forested areas
- Existing trees over 18” in diameter
- Athens-Clarke County trees > 2” in diameter
- Individual or groups of trees to be conserved
- Forest regeneration areas
- Future forest areas
- Planted trees
- Environmental areas
- 2’ grading contours
- A summary table that includes the following:
 - * Current tree canopy cover
 - * Conserved tree canopy cover
 - * Planted tree canopy cover
 - * Total tree canopy cover

ACC TREES ON RIGHT-OF-WAY MUST BE INCLUDED ON THE TREE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Trees located on the public street right-of-way cannot be removed without approval. **A right-of-way encroachment permit is required for ANY activity that will occur within the tree protection zone of an ACC tree.**

Tree Conservation Standards

- ◆ Conserved trees and forested areas must have active tree protection during construction.
- ◆ Tree protection fencing must be installed at the drip line or at the perimeter of the critical root zone (whichever is greater).
- ◆ The critical root zone has a radius of 1.25 feet for every inch in diameter.
- ◆ Tree protection fencing must be 4 feet high, high-visibility polypropylene fencing or hard fencing.
- ◆ Information signs must be posted at 50 foot intervals along the fencing.



ENCROACHMENT INTO THE TREE PROTECTION ZONE

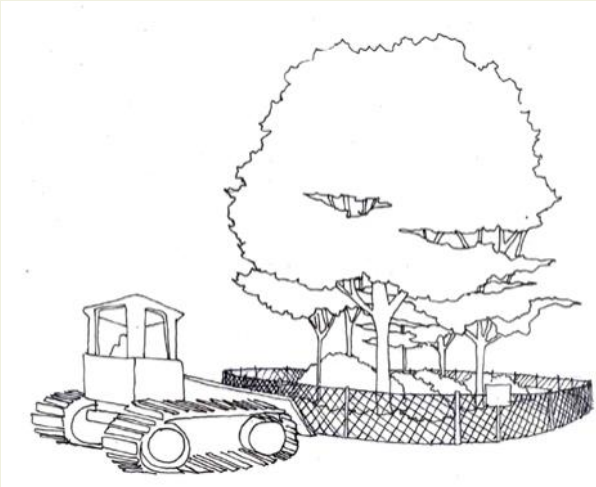
The circle is the extent of the tree protection zone in an aerial view of a tree.

Limited activities can occur within the outer 1/2 of one side of the TPZ.

Prohibited Activities	Limited Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicle/equipment traffic, parking, or storage • Materials or supplies storage • Structure placement. • Equipment maintenance • Wounding of trunk or scaffold limbs • Fires/excessive heat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site clearing or grubbing • Soil excavation, cuts, or fill • Grading • Trenching • Tilling or edging • Soil compaction • Top dressing with soil greater than two inches in depth • Paving

Forested Areas

- ◆ Groups of trees may be conserved for canopy credit.
- ◆ Forested areas should have more than 100 trees greater than 6 inches in diameter.
- ◆ The Arborist or Forester can waive the size requirement if they feel the conserved area retains the characteristics of a forest.



Requirements

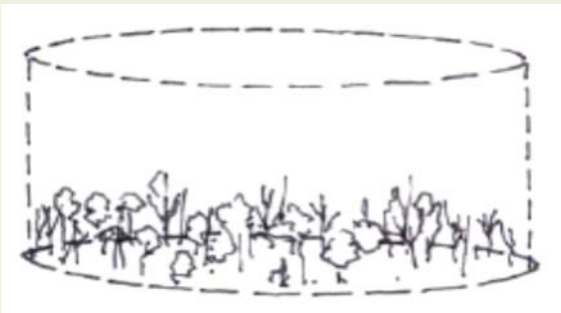
- ◆ Forested areas must be at least 2,500 square feet in size and be a minimum of 20 feet wide in any one dimension.
- ◆ At least 50 percent of the area shall be contiguous.
- ◆ It must include the tree protection zone of all trees, and the trees must be protected using active tree protection.
- ◆ Mowing and turf are not permitted.
- ◆ The forest shall remain in an undisturbed condition; only invasive species and hazardous trees may be removed.
- ◆ Areas dominated by kudzu or Chinese privet are not eligible.
- ◆ No active recreation or timber harvesting will be allowed.

Forest Regeneration Areas

- ◆ Forest Regeneration Areas may be used to satisfy planted canopy credits or as alternative compliance methods for conserved canopy requirements in areas where environmental conditions, lot character or other regulations prevent a developer from conserving canopy.
- ◆ Forest Regeneration Areas are preferred over Future Forest Areas.

Requirements

- Each area must be at least 2,500 square feet.
- Soils shall have a pH between 5.8 and 7.0, be at least 5% organic matter, and be aerated to a depth of 8 inches.
- At least 245 trees per acre shall be planted.
- 15% of trees must be large canopy trees that are at least 1.5 inch caliper; 30% of trees must be medium canopy trees that are at least 0.5 inch caliper; and the remaining 55% of trees must be seedlings that are at least 1.5 feet tall.
- Trees must be native to the Piedmont area of Georgia, and no more than 15% of any one species can be planted.
- Turf and mowing are not permitted.
- Once trees have been planted, the area must remain in an undisturbed condition; only invasive species and hazardous trees may be removed.
- No active recreation or timber harvesting will be allowed.

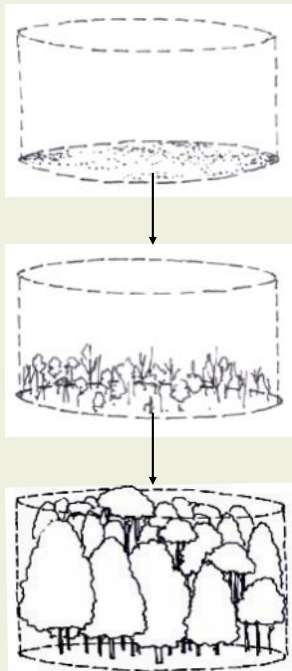


Future Forest Areas

- ◆ Future Forest Areas are areas permanently set aside or conserved where natural forest succession can take over.
- ◆ Future Forest Areas may be used to satisfy planted canopy credits or as alternative compliance methods for conserved canopy requirements in areas where environmental conditions, lot character or other regulations prevent a developer from conserving canopy.

Requirements

- Each area must be at least 2,500 square feet.
- Turf and mowing are not permitted.
- The area shall remain in an undisturbed condition; only invasive species and hazardous trees may be removed.
- No active recreation or timber harvesting will be allowed.



New Tree Establishment

Standards

- ◆ Trees must have a minimum caliper of 2 inches unless otherwise specified.
- ◆ No more than 30% of any one species can be planted.
- ◆ Appropriate species must be used for parking lot and street trees.
- ◆ Trees that require staking to stand upright, have severe forks, or have other defects will not be counted for canopy credit.
- ◆ Trees may be container grown or balled and burlapped. Container grown trees must have circling roots cut or teased out before planting.
- ◆ Trees cannot be planted on or over property lines and corners.
- ◆ The planting area should not be less than 3 feet wide in any one

Open Soil Surface Area Requirements

Canopy Size	Very Small	Small	Medium	Large
Open Soil Surface Area (Square Feet)	25	100	225	400

Site Preparation Standards

- ◆ Soils shall be aerated to a depth of at least 8 inches and shall have at least 5% organic matter.
- ◆ The soil pH shall be between 5.8 and 7.0.
- ◆ **The use of permeable pavements reduces the required open soil surface area by 20%.**

Structural Soils

Structural soil mixes containing approximately 80 aggregate, 20 mineral soil, and a sticking agent may be used to increase rooting volumes. The Arborist may reduce open soil surface area requirements when structural soils are used.

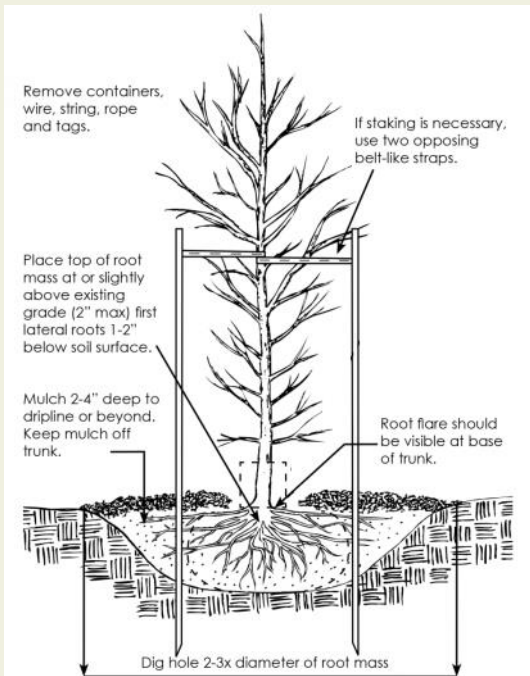
Planting

Container-Grown or Balled & Burlapped Trees

- ◆ The planting hole needs to be at least 2-3 X wide and no deeper than the root ball.
- ◆ The planting hole sides need to slope inward from the top and the bottom needs to be firm soil.
- ◆ The trunk flare must be visible above the ground.
- ◆ Strapping, webbing, twine, strings, or other foreign materials must be removed from the root ball.
- ◆ Burlap and wire basket materials must be removed to a depth of at least 12 inches.
- ◆ Staking must be removed within one year.

Bare Root Trees

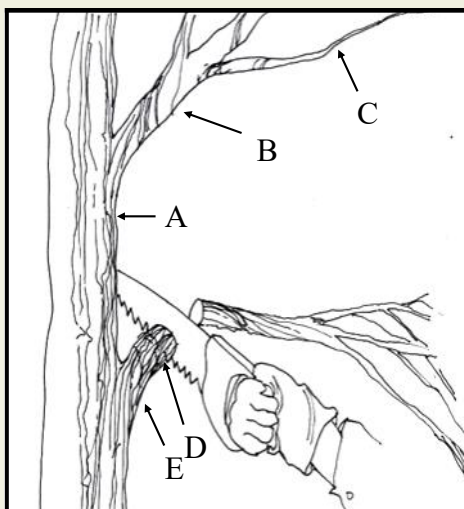
- ◆ Tree roots must remain moist at all times.
- ◆ The planting hole must be deep enough to accommodate all of the roots.
- ◆ The trunk flare must be visible above the ground.
- ◆ There can not be any air pockets around the roots.



Pruning

Standards

- ◆ All pruning must comply with the ANSI A300 standards.
- ◆ Pruning cannot disturb nesting, rare, or endangered wildlife.
- ◆ Only pruning that maintains a tree's natural form may be done.
- ◆ Topping or heading is **not allowed**.
- ◆ Co-dominant stems less than 4 inches must be removed so that only one stem remains.
- ◆ Pruning may not be done to make room for private signs, temporary structures, materials storage, or equipment traffic or storage.



TREE PRUNING BASICS

A = stem

B = parent branch to C

D = stub

E = location of branch collar

Branches (C) should always be pruned back to the parent branch or stem (A or B).

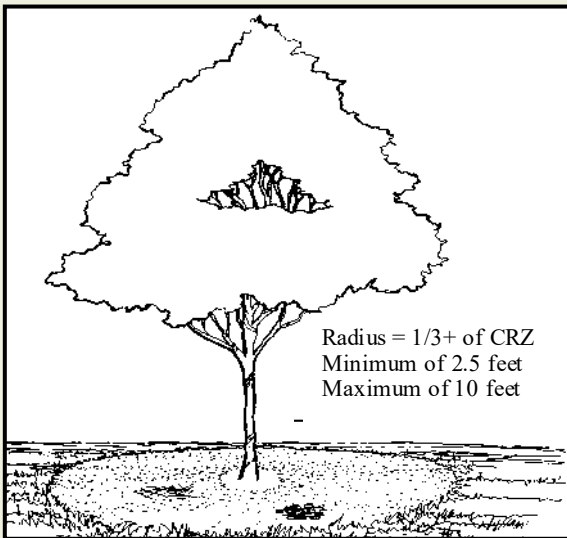
Stubs should never be left (D).

The final pruning cut should be made just outside of the branch collar (E).

Mulching

Standards

- ◆ Individual and conserved trees in groups of 10 or less must be mulched.
- ◆ Trees must be mulched to the outer third of the critical root zone. Mulch shall have a minimum radius of 2.5 feet and a maximum radius of 10 feet. **Mulch cannot touch the trunk of tree.**
- ◆ Mulch must be 3-4 inches deep and should be spread from 6 inches out from the trunk to the outer extent of the mulch zone.
- ◆ Mulch must be applied on an annual basis.
- ◆ Mulch must be composed of organic materials.
- ◆ Grass clippings, plastic sheeting, rocks, and un-aged wood chips are not suitable mulching material.



RECOMMENDED ORGANIC MULCH MATERIALS

*Pine straw
Leaves
Wood chips
Compost
Pine bark*

Apply in an even layer at least 3 inches deep, but do not apply within 6 inches of the trunk.

Other Tree Care Standards

- ◆ When natural rainfall is less than one inch per week, newly planted trees should be provided with supplemental watering equivalent to one inch per week.
- ◆ Trees shall be immediately pruned after planting to remove dead, broken, rubbing, and diseased branches.
- ◆ Trees must be mulched immediately after planting.
- ◆ Fertilization, cabling and bracing, and lightning protection systems are encouraged, but not required. All tree care work must comply with the ANSI A300 standards.
- ◆ Stumps with a diameter greater than 6 inches must be ground to a depth of 12 inches.

HOW TO LOCATE AN ISA CERTIFIED ARBORIST

ISA has a voluntary certification program for arborists, tree workers, utility arborists, and master arborists.

ACC recommends that you hire ISA Certified Arborists to perform or supervise pruning, lightning protection system installation, tree support system installation, and other technical tree maintenance activities.

To find an ISA Certified Arborist in the area or verify the credentials of an arborist you are considering hiring, visit the ISA website (www.isa-arbor.com). You can search by certification number, location, zip code, or last name.

Tree Removal

Protected Trees May Be Removed If...

- ◆ they are dead or in an unhealthy condition.
- ◆ they have greater than 50% dieback of the crown.
- ◆ they have wounds $> 1/3$ the circumference of the trunk.
- ◆ they have a cavity $> 2/3$ the diameter of the trunk.
- ◆ they have limb defects that would require more than 50% of the canopy to be removed if corrective pruning was used.
- ◆ they have an irresolvable conflict with infrastructure that poses a hazard to public health.
- ◆ they have an insect or disease problem that is not easily cured and has a high probability of spreading to other trees.

Protected trees must be replanted if their removal results in a decrease of tree canopy cover beyond the minimum amount required.



Be Considerate of Local Wildlife!

Any tree removal should not disturb nesting, rare, or endangered wildlife to the greatest extent possible. If these animals are present, the removal should be delayed until the animals are safely removed.



Private Trees May Be Removed If...

- ◆ five or fewer are removed in a calendar year.
- ◆ they are a danger to human life or property.
- ◆ the Community Forester, County Arborist, County Extension Agent, Georgia Forestry Commission, or a certified arborist find the trees to be diseased or insect infested.
- ◆ they are located on a lot less than one acre in a single-family residential zoning district.
- ◆ a timber harvesting notification has been submitted to the Planning Department.



Compliance Checklist



Timber Harvesting

- _____ Submit a notification of timber harvesting (NTH) to the Planning Department
- _____ Supply a map and description of activities with the NTH
- _____ Include the contact information for the buyer with the NTH
- _____ Include the contact information for the seller with the NTH
- _____ Supply a \$5,000 bond or letter of credit to the Planning Department

Tree Management Plan

- _____ Show existing and proposed utilities
- _____ Show existing site conditions
 - _____ existing trees >18 inches
 - _____ Landmark Trees
 - _____ Athens-Clarke County trees > 2 inches
 - _____ forested areas
 - _____ highlight which trees are to be conserved
- _____ Show future forest areas and forest regeneration areas
- _____ Show where future trees will be planted
- _____ Show any proposed structures or hardscape
- _____ Show existing and proposed 2' contours/limits of grading
- _____ Show any state or local Environmental Areas
- _____ Include a summary table outlining existing canopy, conserved canopy, future canopy, and the number and types of trees that will be planted
- _____ Turn in a completed Tree Management Plan to the Arborist

Compliance Checklist

During Construction

- Protect trees and forested areas that are to be conserved
 - erect tree protection fencing prior to land disturbance activities
 - post protected area signs every 50 feet around conserved trees
 - pass a tree protection inspection
- Develop site without compromising protected areas
- Plant required trees
- Comply with technical standards
 - planting practices meet standards
 - mulching practices meet standards
 - pruning practices meet standards
- Be sure you have restored enough canopy to meet your canopy requirements
- Pass the Certificate of Occupancy Inspection

Notice to Developers

An approved tree management plan is considered a binding plan by which trees are selectively planted and conserved to meet local codes. Any conflicts that arise during construction must be discussed with Athens-Clarke County staff before any actions are taken that deviate from the approved plan.

