

Chapter 21A-24
Rules and Regulations of the
Department of Development and Environmental Services

Steep Slope Hazard Areas:
Vegetation Removal for View Corridors

Effective Date: March 5, 1995

Document No. _____

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21A-24-670 Definitions:

A. Branch bark collar. "Branch bark collar" means the ring of living wood between the base of a branch and the branch bark ridge of a tree.

B. Branch bark ridge. "Branch bark ridge" means the raised ridge between the mainstem of a tree and the branch bark collar.

C. Canopy. "Canopy" means that part of a tree which contains leaf or needle-bearing branches.

D. Diameter at breast height ("DBH"). "Diameter at breast height" means the tree trunk diameter measured in inches at a height of four and one-half feet (4 1/2') above the ground. If a tree splits into multiple trunks below four and one-half feet (4 1/2'), DBH means the tree trunk diameter measured in inches at its most narrow point beneath the split.

E. Department. "Department" means the Department of Development and Environmental Services of King County.

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F. Pruning. "Pruning" means the removal of any of a tree's living branches.

G. Topping. "Topping" means the removal of any part of a tree's main stem.

H. Trimming. "Trimming" means the removal of living plant matter from any type of vegetation and includes tree pruning and topping.

21A-24-671 Purpose. It is the purpose of these rules to implement the provisions of K.C.C. 21A.24.310 by prescribing permit application requirements and trimming restrictions and standards for vegetation on steep slopes for the creation and maintenance of view corridors when a clearing and grading permit is required by K.C.C. 16.82.

21A-24-672 Application Requirements. A. In addition to the application requirements for a clearing and grading permit, an applicant proposing to trim vegetation on a steep slope shall submit a vegetation management plan which includes a site plan at a scale of no less than 1"=30' with the following information:

1. an inventory and location of existing trees and other vegetation;
2. identification of any proposed trimming;
3. a description of proposed trimming methods and equipment; and
4. a description of how the trimming proposal complies with trimming restrictions in rule 21A-24-673, including photo documentation, if accessible. If photo access is limited, an alternative method of visual depiction shall be proposed by the applicant and approved by the Department.

B. Trees and other vegetation proposed to be trimmed shall be marked in the field by the applicant.

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21A-24-673 Trimming Restrictions. A. Trimming of trees and other vegetation on steep slopes shall meet the following requirements:

1. trimming shall be evenly distributed throughout the tree's canopy;
2. vegetation shall not be trimmed below a height of four feet (4') above the ground's surface;
3. one (1) clearing permit shall be allowed per site every five (5) years;
4. trimming of deciduous vegetation shall be allowed only during the months of December, January and February; and
5. trees shall not be topped.

B. Pruning of trees on steep slopes shall meet the following requirements:

1. pruning shall not result in removal of more than twenty-five percent (25%) of the canopy of any tree;
2. pruning shall be allowed on a tree once every five (5) years; and
3. pruning of coniferous trees shall be allowed only during the months of March, April and May.

C. The department may further restrict or prohibit trimming if the department determines that the proposed trimming will result in any of the following:

1. decreased slope stability;
2. an adverse affect on the health or stability of trees or other vegetation;
3. increased risk of wind damage to neighboring trees or other vegetation;
4. an adverse affect on the surface or groundwater characteristics of the slope; or
5. an adverse affect on the water quality of adjacent streams and/or wetlands.

D. Factors which the department may consider, but not be limited to, in determining if trimming shall be restricted or prohibited under subsection (C) include:

1. the type of soil on the slope;

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2. the steepness and geology of the slope;
3. the surface and groundwater characteristics of the slope;
4. the health, location, species and size of trees and other vegetation on the slope;
5. past evidence of erosion, landsliding, mass wasting or other indication of slope instability;
6. past evidence of trimming; or
7. past evidence of water in adjacent streams and/or wetlands exceeding water quality standards.

21A-24-674 Trimming Standards. A. Trimming shall meet the following standards:

1. trimming shall preserve the health of the tree and other vegetation;
2. pruning of tree branches greater than or equal to two inches (2") in diameter shall be accomplished by a three (3) cut sequence as described and illustrated below:
 - a. the first cut shall be located one foot (1') beyond the intended final cut, starting at the underside of the branch and penetrating no more than halfway through the branch;
 - b. the second cut shall be located one inch (1") from the first cut, on the side of the cut further away from the mainstem of the tree. The second cut shall begin at the top part of the branch and shall sever the branch completely; and
 - c. the third and final cut shall remove the remaining stub and shall be positioned at the part of the branch which is closest to the mainstem of the tree but outside of the branch bark collar and/or the branch bark ridge. The final cut shall be clean and smooth with the bark at the edge of the cut firmly attached to the wood.

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3. trimming shall not result in flush cuts which remove the entire branch including the branch bark collar and the branch bark ridge as illustrated below:

(Electronic diagram unavailable.)

4. trimming shall not result in stem stubs as illustrated below:

(Electronic diagram unavailable.)

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5. wounds resulting from allowable trimming shall not be painted or otherwise sealed.

21A-24-675 Severability. If a provision of the rules contained herein or its applicability to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the provisions of these rules or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances shall not be affected.