

TREE TOPPING

OVERVIEW

As a tree owner, you may feel that a large tree poses a risk to your property; however, topping is not a viable method of risk reduction and may increase your risks in the long term. Learn how to avoid the practice of tree topping and about the civil infractions associated with this issue in the City of Sammamish.

DEFINITION

According to the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) A300 Part 1 (pruning), tree topping is a reduction of tree size by cutting live branches and leaders to stubs, without regard to the long-term tree health or structural integrity of the tree.

ALTERNATIVES

Consult with an ISA Certified Arborist to learn more about the options for crown reductions, risk reductions, pruning techniques and enhanced views.

RESOURCES

[Tree Permitting Guide](#)

[Sammamish Unified Development Code - Trees](#)

[Find a ISA TRAQ Certified Arborist](#)

[Washington DNR - Alternatives to Topping](#)

ASSESSMENT

- The City assesses a tree as damaged when the pruning system disregards the tree's long-term health or structural integrity.
- When the severity of the damage can be mitigated through a natural pruning system (ANSI A300, Part 5.2.1), the City will assess the tree as damaged and require mitigation.
- If the damage is too severe, the tree will be assessed as a removed tree. For trees that are damaged or removed in violation of SMC 21.A.37, the City can apply civil fines and penalties.

FINES & PENALTIES

- Any person responsible for a violation of SMC 21A.37 shall be liable for mitigation and shall pay a civil penalty of \$1,500 per inch of diameter at breast height of tree removed or damaged (SMC 23.100.015).
- If the tree dies as a consequence of tree topping, even done with a permit, a civil infraction could be applied.

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