

CLW TRADE-A-TREE PROGRAM

Trees & Power Lines

We all depend on the benefits made possible by safe, clean, reliable electricity. We are also a society that values nature, especially trees. Trees purify the air we breathe. They provide shade for our homes and habitat for wildlife.

Trees that grow too close to electric lines cause power outages and threaten the public safety. Many of Clarksville Light & Water's electric outages are caused by trees falling on or coming in contact with power lines. In these modern times, interruptions in electric service cause major inconveniences.

Reliable service, public safety, and customer satisfaction are very important to the City as your supplier of electricity. We will not trim or remove any tree unless it poses a threat to either public safety or electric service reliability. This brochure explains the program the City of Clarksville has developed to manage trees in the vicinity of our power lines.

Lateral Trimming:

Following is an explanation of our tree trimming guidelines. These guidelines reflect the accepted standards among horticulturists and other experts in the field such as the National Arbor Day Foundation, the International Society of Arboriculture, the National Arborist Association, and other professional and trade organizations.

Wind easily whips the branches of an untrimmed tree into electrical conductors, perhaps causing power outages. If this tree falls, several spans of wire may be affected.



The "rounding over" method of trimming stimulates uncoordinated growth and can threaten the life of the tree. Sucker sprouts quickly outgrow the line clearance initially achieved through rounding over, thus making the original trimming useless. Horticultural studies conducted over the past 20 years show that rounding over is detrimental to the health of trees because the randomly placed cuts produce stubs that are susceptible to fungi, insects, disease, and decay. The weakened tree has increased chance of limb breakage during wind, ice, and snow storms.

Lateral, or natural trimming, is the accepted method used by the City crews. The name "lateral" is derived from the method of cutting branches back to natural strong point on the tree, such as the juncture of the trunk and major limbs, major limbs and branches, and the like. Re-growth can occur with lateral trimming, but is not accompanied by profuse sprouting. Also, the lateral branches tend to direct the growth away from the power lines.



This is how a tree appears if it is trimmed by lateral pruning on only those branches that threaten the power lines. Branches growing above the conductors are directed up and back; those growing below the power lines are directed down and back. The next season's growth is then concentrated in the direction the lateral cuts were placed.

The tree will take this shape with future correct trimming cycles.

Proper Pruning:

The CLW's tree trimming guidelines have been carefully designed to reflect the recommendations of urban foresters and experts from the National Arborist Association.

Note: These minimum clearance guidelines may be altered by CLW to best suit the particular tree species involved.

Removal of a Tree

Repetitive trimming of fast-growing tree located directly under or near the lines is a costly and temporary fix. Many trees that are trimmed heavily to clear the wire, develop extensive internal decay and become a hazard. In these cases, the best solution may be removal of the tree. Please contact our Electric Department, at (479) 754-3148 if you have any questions about tree removal.

The Long-Term Solution

Look up before you plant. Before you invest in a tree that will grow tall, look around the area where you intend to plant. Carefully match the tree species with the location. Trees with mature heights over 25 feet should be planted at least 25 feet from any overhead utility lines.

The reliability of your neighborhood's electric service may depend on your choice of trees and where you plant them. Your cooperation with the Clarksville Light & Water's Tree Management and Trimming Program is essential. If you have any questions, regarding the program, please contact the Electric Department at (479) 754-3148.