

Section 12 – Significant Trees

12.1 Background

The historic heritage or cultural value of a particular tree or group of trees often attributes to past human activity. Likewise a tree or group of trees may be rare, have a specific function, or be of an age, size or form that offers important amenity or botanical value. Trees that fall into any of these categories can be instrumental in providing a sense of continuity and identity for communities and visitors alike. Individually or collectively they are recognised as an important natural resource which can positively contribute to the heritage, amenity and quality of the environment in the District.

The RMA allows for the protection of trees in an 'urban environment' where they have been specifically identified in the District Plan (see RMA Section 76). Accordingly, the Significant Tree Schedule in Appendix 3 recognises and identifies trees in the Commercial, Industrial, Residential and Recreation Areas that make an important contribution to the quality of the environment, heritage or amenity values in the District. Section 37 Significant Trees rules provide the resource management framework to manage activities that may impact on them.

The selection and identification of trees on the Significant Tree Schedule has taken into account:

1. Notable significance – the tree is of a significant age or exemplifies significant stature, vitality or form.
2. Botanical or scientific significance – the significance of the tree because of its rarity, its representativeness, its value as a native tree or its unusual genetic form.
3. Historic heritage significance – the tree is associated with historic events, people and significant periods in the development of the District.
4. Cultural and spiritual significance – the tree has significant customary or spiritual value to a particular group of people.
5. Landmark significance – there are visual and spatial qualities which make the tree an important landscape feature of a particular area.
6. Functional significance – the tree has a significant physical and ecological function which may include amenity or climatic benefits (e.g. shade, screening, shelter and temperature control).
7. Amenity values - the qualities and characteristics of a tree that contribute to people's appreciation of it.

12.2 Issues

1. Significant trees are at potential risk from land intensification, subdivision and land use activities. The removal, modification or degradation of a tree can result in a reduction of amenity values, the quality of the environment and in some cases, the irreversible loss of important historic heritage or cultural values.
2. The protection and maintenance of trees for public good can conflict with private property rights. The value of the tree to the public needs to be weighed against the right of a private property owner to address any adverse effects that a significant tree may have on their property, its use and development.
3. The identification of trees that iwi value for their significant contribution to their culture. This would assist to maintain and protect these resources from being irretrievably lost or damaged.

12.3 Objectives and Policies

Objective 1

Trees identified on the Significant Tree Schedule are maintained and protected.

Policy 1a

Work on or within the vicinity of a significant tree shall be carried out in a way that does not adversely affect the health of the tree.

Policy 1b

Work on a significant tree shall be carried out in accordance with accepted arboriculture practice.

Policy 1c

Financial incentives may be considered where they can assist private property owners with the care and maintenance of a significant tree.

Policy 1d

The removal or felling of a significant tree shall be avoided, unless there are health and safety reasons for its removal.

Objective 2

Acknowledgement of the values of a significant tree or trees on a site is achieved through an integrated approach to subdivision and land use.

Policy 2a

Subdivision and land use activities shall take into account the location of significant trees on a site being subdivided and/or developed and integrate them with the design and layout to retain their significance.

Policy 2b

Subdivision and land use activities should consider private property rights as well as the public value of significant trees.