

Marsh Lakes Association

Tree Canopy Management

Aug 1, 2019

Introduction:

In the aftermath of our recent hurricanes there is a growing interest in better recognizing and managing potential hazards that tree condition or location can sometimes create. At the same time, we are a community that enjoys and values the benefits of a mature tree canopy (shade and cooler temperatures). Our challenge is defining a process that will balance these competing desires.

Suggested Procedures:

1. Maintenance of our trees and large, woody plantings is the responsibility of the Association and each of our members/property owners. Maintenance should include appropriate pruning of all such trees and plantings. This not only improves their appearance, but their health and vigor as well. Many non-native species and some native species grow very rapidly in our warm, damp climate. In some cases these species can bolt in height or have their foliage grow so full/dense that it is difficult for "air to pass through" making them susceptible to blowing over or having major limbs twisted off. After a significant wind storm, go out to "survey" your property. Was there any damage to branches, trunk or rootball?

2. Major plantings should be inspected several times each year. Is there evidence of aphids, scale, caterpillars or other insects damaging our plantings? If so, these may need to be treated with pesticides or organic substances to eliminate these threats. Some species require fertilizer or other chemical treatment to remain healthy and long-lived. Iron and manganese is a continual need for many palms, citrus, camellias, azaleas, gardenias, hibiscus, and hollies. If plantings have a change in appearance, there is likely a problem that needs to be identified and addressed. Have an arborist visit or take pictures or samples to the local nursery for advice.

Hardwoods and many evergreens need some pruning and examination at least once each year (more often if possible). Small sucker sprouts and broken limbs should be removed. Make sure that Virginia creeper and grape vines have not established themselves. Cut sections out of these vines and try to pull down as much as possible.

3. When planting trees and bushes, ensure that the species selected is a good fit for the intended location. Look up the candidate species on the internet. It can tell the mature height/spread/shape, best type of soil, amount of sunlight required, best climate zones, tolerance for drought or salt, and even projected life span. Make sure this is the right species for the intended location. Keep in mind that in most cases, this addition will require an approval from the ARC prior to planting.

4. Decisions on removal of tree(s) always require the approval of the Architectural Review Committee (ARC) if the tree measures greater than or equal to 6 inch diameter at 4 1/2 feet above grade. This should be a simple test.... 6 inch diameter at chest height. The ARC will need specific information from you: Fill out an application (available on the marshlake.org web site) and provide all requested information including what you would like to do and why you feel you need to do it; a copy of your plat or survey with the subject tree(s) located on the plat. If an apparently healthy tree is to be removed, an owner should have an arborist or other recognized authority inspect the subject tree and provide a recommendation on what should be done and why. All of this needs to go to the appropriate ARC (either Village or Estates).

The committee chairs and members are listed on marshlake.org. The ARC has up to 30 days to make a decision. However, many decisions can be made much sooner.

5. The Architectural Review Committee (ARC) will evaluate your request based on the Covenants and procedures in this document. The ARC may say “yes”; They may say “no”; Or, they may provide a conditional “yes”. “Yes you may cut down the requested tree(s), IF you plant replacement tree(s) as described.” This may include a specific number of trees or size or species. It may require a revision to the landscape plan for the property to make up for the elimination of the requested tree(s).

If an owner does not agree with the ARC decision, the issue can be appealed to the Marsh Lakes Board of Directors at a future meeting.

6. If an owner decides to remove tree(s) without approval, that owner risks substantial fines or other penalties by the Marsh Lakes Association as allowed under our governing documents and Florida statutes.