OAKSTEAD
TREE & PROPERTY CARE INC.

Builder's Tree Permit Checklist: Greater Victoria

For builders, renovators and designers working near trees in Greater Victoria, the Saanich Peninsula and the Cowichan Valley.

Trees on or near a building site can hold up a permit, add cost or trigger a stop-work order if they're missed. Use this checklist at each phase of the project. Tick each box as you go and keep a copy in the project file.

Rules differ by municipality. Which trees are protected, what needs a permit and how securities work all vary across the region. See the bylaw comparison table at **https://oakstead.ca/consulting-and-permitting-services/** and always confirm current rules with the municipality before you start.

Quick terms

- **Protected tree:** a tree your municipality's bylaw says you can't cut, damage or remove without a permit.
- **TPZ (tree protection zone):** the area around a tree, set by an arborist, that must stay undisturbed to protect the roots and trunk.
- **Arborist report:** a written assessment of the trees on a site, often required with a permit application.
- **Project arborist:** the arborist who checks the site during construction and confirms the tree protection plan is followed.
- **Security:** money (often a bond or letter of credit) the municipality holds until the trees are shown to be protected or replaced.

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1. Before you buy or design

☐ Walk the site and note every tree on the lot, including small trees and trees near the property lines.
☐ Note trees on neighbouring lots and on the boulevard whose roots or branches reach onto the site.
☐ Identify boundary trees (trunks on or across a property line). You'll usually need the neighbour's written consent before working on them.
☐ Check which trees may be protected under the municipal bylaw. Use the bylaw table on oakstead.ca as a starting point, then confirm with the municipality.
☐ Get a tree inventory early, before the design is fixed. An inventory lists each tree's species, size, location and condition.
☐ Ask an arborist to flag trees that will limit the building envelope, driveway or servicing, so the design can work around them.
☐ Factor arborist fees, possible replacement trees and tree securities into the project budget.

2. Before you apply (DP, BP, rezoning, subdivision, demolition)

DP = development permit. BP = building permit.

☐ Find out which applications on this project need an arborist report. Rezoning, subdivision, development, building and demolition permits may each have their own tree requirements.
☐ Order the arborist report early. Last-minute reports are a common cause of permit delays.
☐ Show every protected tree and its TPZ on the site plan, drawn to scale.
☐ Check that the building footprint, driveway, decks, retaining walls and grading stay outside the TPZ, or that the arborist has assessed any work inside it.
☐ Route water, sewer, storm, power, gas and telecom lines away from roots. Show the routes on the site plan.
☐ Plan where excavation, stockpiles, equipment access, parking and the site office will go, all outside the TPZ.
☐ Get the tree protection plan prepared and attached to the application, if the municipality requires one.
☐ If any tree removal is proposed, confirm whether a separate tree permit is needed and how many replacement trees the municipality expects.
☐ Confirm the amount and form of any tree security, and when and how it will be released.
☐ Get written neighbour consent for any work affecting boundary or neighbouring trees.

3. Site prep (before demolition or clearing)

- ☐ Install tree protection fencing at the TPZ line shown in the tree protection plan, **before** demolition, clearing or any machine arrives.
- ☐ Have the project arborist inspect and approve the fencing. Get it in writing (a letter of assurance or site report) if the municipality asks for it.
- ☐ Put up signage on the fencing (for example, "Tree Protection Zone: No Entry") so every trade can see it.
- ☐ Brief the site supervisor and all trades on the TPZ rules on day one.
- ☐ Take dated photos of the fencing, signage and each protected tree before work starts.
- ☐ Confirm that any approved tree removal is done by a qualified tree crew, under a valid permit, before the site is opened up.

4. During construction

- ☐ Keep fencing in place and upright for the whole project. Don't move it without the project arborist's approval.
- ☐ No storage, stockpiles, parking, equipment or site office inside the TPZ.
- ☐ No concrete washout, fuel, paint, solvent or other spills inside or uphill of the TPZ.
- ☐ No grade changes (cutting or filling soil) inside the TPZ unless the arborist has approved them.
- ☐ Hand dig or use air excavation (high-pressure air that removes soil without cutting roots) for any approved work inside the TPZ.
- ☐ Don't cut roots without the arborist on site. Roots that must be cut should be cut cleanly by or under the arborist's direction.
- ☐ Book project arborist supervision visits at the stages set out in the tree protection plan (for example, excavation near the TPZ, servicing, and landscaping).
- ☐ Call the project arborist right away if a tree is damaged or fencing is breached.
- ☐ Take dated photos at each visit and after any work near the TPZ. Keep them with the arborist's site reports.
- ☐ Keep all arborist letters and reports in one project file. You'll need them at the end.

5. Final inspection and security release

- ☐ Remove tree protection fencing only after the project arborist says it can come down (usually after landscaping is done).
- ☐ Have the project arborist do a final inspection of the protected trees.
- ☐ Plant any required replacement trees: right species, size and location, as set out in the permit.
- ☐ Get the post-construction (security-release) letter from the project arborist confirming the trees were protected and replacements are in.
- ☐ Submit the letter, photos and any other documents the municipality asks for to request release of the tree security.
- ☐ Hand the owner a copy of the tree protection records and any aftercare advice for the retained and replacement trees.

How Oakstead helps

Oakstead Tree & Property Care is a **consulting-only** arborist company based in Brentwood Bay. Our ISA Certified Arborist assesses trees, writes reports and plans, and helps with permits. We don't cut, prune or remove trees. Hands-on work goes to vetted local partners, and we take no referral fees.

Service	From (CAD, plus GST)
Tree protection plan, single lot	$1,450
Project arborist site visit	$325
Letter of assurance	$195
Post-construction / security-release letter	$295

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Request a consultation: https://oakstead.ca/quote/

This checklist is general guidance, not legal advice. Municipal rules change; confirm current requirements with your municipality before you start.

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