

When Trees, Shrubs and Grass Become a Public Nuisance

April is that time of year when both people and plants come out from their winter hiding places. Sometimes our landscaping can enjoy the weather just a little too much and grow to the point where they create a violation of Snohomish Municipal Code.

It's not surprising that with the arrival of spring the City typically begins receiving calls and emails from residents expressing concern about overgrown landscaping.

This article is to enhance awareness of Snohomish Municipal Code (SMC) regulations that address this issue.

SMC 9.94.030 specifies what actions or conditions are considered to be a nuisance. Subsections H.9 and H.10 address vegetation issues.

SMC 9.94.030.H.9 states that when trees and shrubs overhang a public sidewalk with less than nine feet of vertical clearance it is a nuisance. Similarly, when vegetation overhanging a public street has less than 12 feet of clearance, it is a nuisance. In addition, grass or weeds on private property that are over six inches in height are also a nuisance.

While subsection H.9 is mostly about free movement, convenience, and aesthetics, subsection H.10 is all about safety. It prohibits any vegetation from obstructing the "visibility triangle" at intersections. Therefore, those of you living on a corner lot have the added responsibility to ensure vegetation on your property does not create a hazard by blocking the view of drivers stopped at an intersection trying to look up and down the street they are crossing.

So, how do you prevent your landscaping from becoming the subject of a complaint? The best way is to keep your landscaping trained through trimming and mowing. If you have exuberant landscaping that is untrainable, it could become a nuisance and you will have to either cut it back significantly or remove it.

For more information about problematic landscaping or property maintenance regulations contact City Building/Fire Official Sharon Pettit at 360-282-3158 or pettit@snohomishwa.gov.