

Smart Tree Planting Near Power Lines: Safety Starts with the Right Choice

Trees add beauty, shade, and value to homes, neighborhoods and commercial properties. But choosing the wrong trees—and planting them too close to power lines—can lead to serious and costly consequences down the road.

Clark Public Utilities strongly discourages planting trees near power lines and poles. Trees and overhead power infrastructure simply don't mix. That's why we urge builders, contractors and property owners to plan ahead before planting, selecting tree varieties that won't exceed 20 feet in height when planted near utility lines.

Why Tree Selection Matters

Managing vegetation around power lines isn't just a matter of convenience—it's about keeping the power on and people safe. Here are four key reasons why we enforce strict tree clearance standards:

1. Preventing Outages

Tree limbs are one of the leading causes of power outages in Clark County. During storms or high winds, branches that touch or fall on power lines can knock out electricity for entire neighborhoods.

2. Fire Risk

Trees that make contact with bare energized lines can ignite fires—especially in dry conditions. This risk is even greater in wildfire-prone areas.

3. Public Safety

Downed power lines caused by trees are dangerous. Live wires can pose electrocution hazards to the public, emergency responders, and utility crews.

4. Meeting Regulatory Standards

Utilities are required by agencies like FERC and state regulators to maintain safe distances between vegetation and equipment. Non-compliance can lead to penalties or legal issues.

Partner Early to Save Later

The best time to make smart tree decisions is during the design phase. Partnering with your landscape architect or project manager now can prevent expensive maintenance or tree removals later. Clark Public Utilities offers free consultation through our Forestry Department. Email your landscaping plan to forestry@clarkpud.com to ensure it aligns with utility safety requirements and easements. For a list of suggested trees, visit www.clarkpublicutilities.com/treesmart.

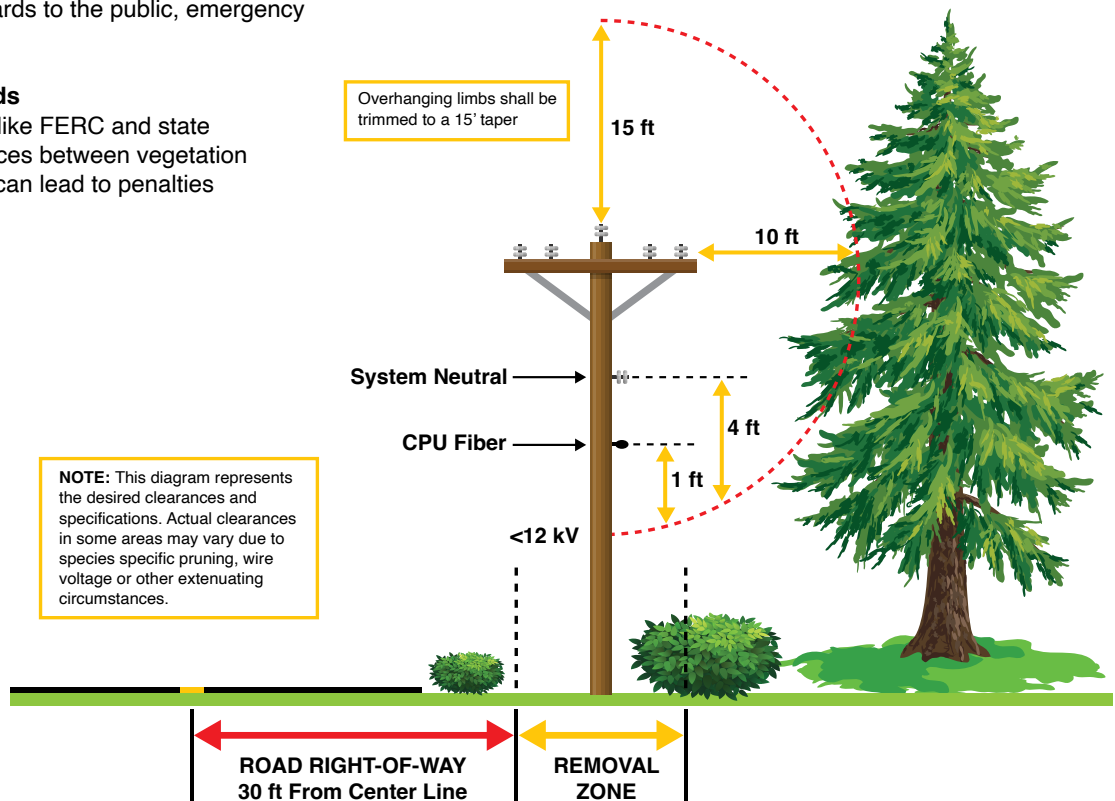
Clearance Guidelines at a Glance

- Never plant trees that grow over 20 feet tall under or near power lines.
- Pruning clearances include:
 - 15 feet above the uppermost conductor
 - 8–10 feet to the side depending on the system
 - 4 feet below the system neutral (or 1 foot below fiber lines)
 - Dead or hazardous limbs must be removed entirely
- If proper pruning requires removing more than 50% of a tree's crown, removal may be necessary.

A Shared Responsibility

Clark Public Utilities is committed to maintaining a reliable, safe electric system and we believe in working together with property developers and contractors. With early planning, communication and informed tree choices, we can protect both the power grid and your investment in landscaping.

Distribution Line Clearance Specifications



Have questions about your next project? Contact Clark Public Utilities Forestry Department (360) 992-8863 before landscaping to ensure your plans meet utility safety standards.