

Fact sheet

Fire, Vegetation and Property Management

This fact sheet is intended to help guide property owners and occupiers with managing their property, including clearing overgrowth and rubbish, reducing fire risks and managing vegetation.

OVERGROWN AND UNSIGHTLY PROPERTIES

Properties that are overgrown with weeds and long grass, or have an accumulation of objects, rubbish or materials may not only be unsightly, they can also pose a serious fire risk and provide a home for vermin, such as rats and mice.

Redland City Council requires property owners and occupiers to maintain their property by removing weeds, long grass, and unsightly rubbish or objects.

Property owners and occupiers have an obligation under Council's *Local Law 3 - Community and Environmental Management* to keep their and neighbouring properties safe by:

- minimising overgrown vegetation
- maintaining access paths and fire breaks
- mowing cleared areas regularly
- trimming low branches near the house
- clearing gutters regularly
- not accumulating objects and materials unless properly stored (not unsightly)
- reducing or removing combustible material like dead leaves and branches.

Unsightly Accumulation

A person must not bring on, allow to accumulate, or place on a property, any objects, materials or vegetation which is unsightly or not in accordance with the amenity of the area.

Examples of objects or materials which may be considered unsightly include:

- broken down vehicles and car bodies
- broken down boats, boat trailers and dilapidated boat parts
- scrap machinery or machinery parts
- discarded bottles, containers or packaging
- dilapidated or unsightly building hoardings
- shopping trolleys
- overgrown vegetation.

Fires and fire hazards

A fire hazard is anything that is flammable in nature, and due to its position or its quantity, exposes property to significant risk of damage or destruction by fire. This may include:

- a substantial amount of grass clippings that may spontaneously combust
- dry vegetation – particularly small twigs - that could easily ignite and spread fire
- any other flammable material.

Council Actions

Where overgrown vegetation or accumulated objects/materials occur that are considered overgrown, unsightly or a habitat for vermin, Council officers can direct residents to take steps to remedy the situation and issue fines.



Photo: Michael Coghlan



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FIRE MANAGEMENT

While property owners and occupiers must clear overgrown properties and unsightly accumulation of objects and materials, to reduce fire hazards, the same local law also restricts the lighting of fires.

In accordance with *Schedule 3 of Subordinate Local Law No. 3*, residents in urban areas or properties less than 6,000 m², the lighting of fires is generally prohibited or restricted unless the fire is well contained within a commercial incinerator, barbeque; enclosed fireplace, stove or heater or similar device constructed to prevent the escape of fire or any burning material.

Burning open piles of rubbish or vegetation is banned under these laws.

These requirements are intended to provide for the safety and amenity of the community given fires can start as a result of a single stray spark or ember regardless of preparations that may be in place.

If residents need to dispose of rubbish, they are encouraged to do so for free at their local transfer station.

Fire management on private property

- Redland City Council does not create fire management plans for private properties. Council encourages property owners to contact organisations such as SEQ Fire and Biodiversity Consortium and Queensland Fire & Emergency Service (QFES) who are able to support the development of fire management plans.
- Private property owners can request a local QFES officer to attend their property at no cost to provide a site specific overall fuel hazard assessment and recommendations regarding fire management planning. Requests for QFES to attend and assess a private property can be logged through the website [🌐 qfes.qld.gov.au/forms/ContactUs](https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/forms/ContactUs).
- Through its members and programs the SEQ Fire and Biodiversity Consortium provides best-practice recommendations for fire management, fire ecology and the conservation of biodiversity in the South East Queensland (SEQ) region.
- Free publications and resources are available through the website: [🌐 fireandbiodiversity.org.au](https://www.fireandbiodiversity.org.au) for recommended fire management. A Property Fire Management Manual (Part A) and Fire Management Workbook (Part B) are among the documents being made available through the website.
- In support of this resource, Redland City Council hosts an individual Property Fire Management Workshop each year in conjunction with QFES, and SEQ Fire & Biodiversity Consortium. Held at Redlands IndigiScapes Centre – 17 Runnymede Rd, Capalaba, the workshop provides residents with information about property fire management and balancing fire safety with conservation of bushland flora and fauna. Visit [🌐 indigiscapes.redland.qld.gov.au](https://www.indigiscapes.redland.qld.gov.au) for whats on calender listing.

MANAGING VEGETATION

Controlling overgrown weeds and grasses is important but so is knowing how to manage trees and shrubs on your property.

Trees and shrubs are a vital feature of the urban and rural landscapes that residents and visitors love about the Redlands; providing critical native habitat and corridors, protecting waterways and many ecological benefits.

They add to the outdoor spaces we like to relax in and enjoy and value to property by improving amenity

There are several levels of protection that may apply to trees and other native vegetation. The following provides some guidance for how trees are managed in the Redlands.

If in doubt about what requirements may apply, it is recommended you contact Council before removing trees and other vegetation.

Tree and Vegetation Protection

On privately owned land, trees may be protected in various ways including:

- Vegetation or Tree Protection Order (VPO or TPO) under *Local Law No.6 (Protection of Vegetation)*
- by being included within a Habitat Protection Overlay under the Redlands Planning Scheme (version 7.1)
- by a covenant or condition of a development approval
- if the land has the potential to be subdivided under the current zoning
- if a development application has been lodged with Council and a decision is pending.

On properties with vegetation protection, Council approval is generally required to remove vegetation unless it is specifically exempted by the local law policy.

In particular, if the tree poses a reasonable likelihood of being a threat to life or property you may prune the tree to remove the threat.

- If your property does not have vegetation protection there are no Council restrictions on the removal of trees or vegetation. Call Council on **3829 8999** to find out if your property has vegetation protection.
- It is recommended you also contact the Queensland Government to ascertain any other vegetation protection laws that may apply in some circumstances. Visit: [🌐 qld.gov.au/environment/land/vegetation/management](https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/land/vegetation/management)

Removing trees and other vegetation

If you have protected vegetation, you can remove trees and other vegetation from your property without Council approval if located within:

- 10m of an approved dwelling on any property
- 3m of an approved structure, including sheds and pools
- 3m of a property boundary, as reasonably necessary*, to construct or maintain a boundary fence or to create a fire break.

See *Local Law Policy No.6 (Protection of Vegetation)* for full details.

In some cases, these clearing exemptions may not apply if the tree or trees are specifically identified and protected by a TPO, VPO, a condition of development approval or covenant.

Removing dead or dangerous trees when protected

Dead or dangerous trees on small urban lots containing a dwelling, may generally be removed as they are considered high risk with no sustainable management options available.

On rural properties with protected vegetation, Australian Standard (AS4373-2007) provides guidance for how habitat trees can be rendered safe by pruning. To ensure appropriate consideration of how to manage or remove a dead or dangerous tree it is recommended you obtain advice from a registered arborist prior to removal.

A qualified arborist can determine whether the tree should be retained, pruned or removed by considering factors such as:

- the tree's health and structural integrity
- the tree's proximity and height to dwellings and structures
- how frequently people are around the tree
- wind loading
- drainage conditions around the root zone.

If you intend to remove a tree, Council must be contacted if the tree is protected and is outside the listed exemptions within Local Law Policy No.6.

**Reasonably necessary is a circumstance where there is no alternative way of achieving the purpose that is prudent and feasible. For example, a fire break requires a likely fire source and would not typically require the removal of mature trees as they do not necessarily increase the spread of fire.*

Tips for maintaining trees

National Guidelines are available (Australian Standard AS4373-2007) for the routine pruning and maintenance of amenity trees. Generally the following tree management can be undertaken without Council approval:

- removal of deadwood
- removal of hazardous limbs
- crown lifting
- formative pruning
- selective pruning
- crown thinning
- remedial or restorative pruning
- removal of environmental and declared weed species
- removal of regrowth associated with the maintenance of existing, pasture, cultivated fields, firebreaks, lawn or garden areas, and boundary fence lines
- pruning to avoid or prevent damage to above-ground services.

Other activities that may result in damage to protected trees may need Council approval.

- For more information visit Council's website www.redland.qld.gov.au

You can search Council's website pages for information on:

- Native wildlife trees and plants
- Managing trees on private property
- Local Law 6 – Protection of vegetation
- Local Law 3 – Community and Environmental Management
- Wildlife Connection Plan 2018-2028.

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For more information:
visit
redland.qld.gov.au
call
3829 8999

In event of an emergency call:
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