

## INTRODUCTION/CONTEXT

### **What is Mistletoe:**

- Mistletoe is a parasitic plant that is spread by birds that eat and transport berries and deposit the seeds on host plants. The plant develops inside the host for about two years before producing the shoots visible outside the plant, and it may take years before it blooms and produces seed. Palo verde, ironwood, pine, juniper and other types of desert trees are often infested with mistletoe.
- It appears as clumps which become dense bundles of woody twigs. Clumps become very large and conspicuous, especially in palo verde. It is not possible to eliminate mistletoe from the desert landscape. In addition, mistletoe berries are an important winter food source for many bird species, and the clumps also provide attractive nesting sites.

### **Growth & Spread:**

- Mistletoe is slow growing, and typically causes a slow decline in the host plant over many years. It can take decades for mature, infested trees to die from mistletoe. Mistletoe must have a living plant on which to grow.
- Young or small trees are less prone to infection because birds prefer to perch in the tops of taller and/or more mature trees, so periodic recruitments of new, young trees among older, infested trees allows some mistletoe to remain as part of the landscape. However, the speed of spread is directly related to the severity & closeness of existing infestations, and newly planted trees can be quickly infested if they are growing near older, heavily infested trees.

### **Control:**

- Mistletoe can be controlled by periodic manual removal of aerial shoots (clumps), by cutting off infected branches, and by removal of very heavily infested trees and shrubs. Removing shoots every two or three years will reduce impact on the host plant and will prevent spread since the mistletoe will not have a chance to produce seed. It is important to remove mistletoe before it produces seeds and spread to other limbs or trees. Healthy trees can tolerate a few mistletoe branch infections, but individual branches may be weakened or sometimes killed.
- Heavily infested trees may be reduced in vigor, become stunted, or even killed, especially if stressed by other problems such as drought. For trees and shrubs where a very heavy infestation has persisted for many years, removal may be the only remedy.

## **MISTLETOE IN TROON RIDGE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION**

Dealing with mistletoe is a balancing act. It is neither possible nor useful to try to remove it completely, so treatment in our community is about managing and containing its spread to maintain the health of our landscape and wildlife.

### **Summary:**

This policy outlines handling of mistletoe throughout TRCA, but focuses primarily on handling of mistletoe under the responsibility of the HOA. It recognizes that mistletoe has historically been addressed inconsistently and only intermittently, and now establishes ongoing maintenance and management in alignment with TRCA's published Covenants, Conditions & Restrictions ([CC&Rs](#)). Initial HOA focus will be on saving living trees and limiting spread.

TRCA's approach to managing mistletoe is based on a combination of two key factors:

- Degree of the infestation
- Location of the host plant

Responsibility and cost of the management technique are also considerations in determining the action to be taken.

### **Responsibility**

Based on TRCA's published Covenants, Conditions & Restrictions ([CC&Rs](#)), Property Owners and the TRCA HOA each have responsibilities in managing/containing the spread of mistletoe in TRCA.

#### **Owner Responsibility**

- Per Article 5, Section 5.1 (f) of the Troon Ridge Covenants, Conditions & Restrictions (see page 17 of the [CC&Rs](#)), it is the Owner's responsibility to address any mistletoe infestations on their property.

#### **HOA Responsibility**

- Per Article 4, Sections 4.1 and 4.2(b) of the Troon Ridge Conditions & Restrictions (see pages 11-12 of the [CC&Rs](#)), it is the HOA's responsibility to address mistletoe infestations bordering streets and washes maintained by the HOA, in Transitional Areas, and in Natural Area Open Space (NAOS) within TRCA.

### **Factors Determining Handling of Mistletoe**

#### **Degree of Infestation:**

- **Limited Infestation** - A few (up to 3 or 4) distinct clumps of mistletoe in a tree or shrub that otherwise appears to be healthy. Can likely be removed relatively easily from the ground as part of ongoing landscape maintenance.
- **Moderate Infestation** - Multiple large, conspicuous clumps of mistletoe, particularly at the tops of larger or more mature trees. May require more extensive work to remove, including use of ladders.

- **Heavy Infestation** - Extensive clumps of mistletoe in a tree that may be badly stunted and/or dead or dying. (Note: It is critical to be certain that late-blooming trees are not mistaken for dead/dying trees.) Removal will require significant work and may generate enough waste to result in dump fees.

**Location of Host Plant:**

- **Private Homeowner Property** – Within the front, back, or side yards of homes, and/or within property lines.
- **Bordering Street & Washes** – Within 20 Feet of Streets or HOA-Maintained Washes, and/or Within Twenty Feet Outside of Fencing in NAOS areas Maintained by the HOA.
- **Natural Area Open Space (NAOS) within TRCA** – Other NAOS spaces within TRCA.

**Action/Handling & Responsibility:**

See attached table outlining responsible party and handling of the mistletoe for the defined **degree of infestation** and **location of host plant**.

# Mistletoe in TRCA – Handling & Responsibility

## Per Definitions of Severity & Host Plant Locations in TRCA Mistletoe Policy

		Host Plant Location		
		Private Homeowner Property	Bordering Street & Washes, Transitional Areas	Natural Area Open Space (NAOS)
Degree of infestation	Limited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Routine assessment by knowledgeable landscape personnel &amp; manual removal of visible shoots and/or pruning of branches as soon as it appears to limit infestation &amp; reduce infection of new trees/shrubs.</li> <li>• <b>Homeowner is responsible for work &amp; associated cost.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Routine</b> assessment by HOA-managed landscape maintenance service &amp; periodic manual removal of visible shoots and/or pruning of branches as soon as it appears to limit infestation and reduce the infection of new trees/shrubs.</li> <li>• <b>HOA is responsible for work &amp; associated cost.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Periodic</b> assessment by HOA-managed landscape maintenance service &amp; possible manual removal of visible shoots and/or pruning of branches to limit infestation and reduce the infection of new trees/shrubs.</li> <li>• <b>HOA is responsible for work &amp; associated cost.</b></li> </ul>
	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment by knowledgeable landscape personnel &amp; manual removal of visible shoots and/or pruning of branches to limit infestation &amp; reduce infection of new trees/shrubs.</li> <li>• <b>Homeowner is responsible for work &amp; associated cost.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Periodic</b> assessment by HOA-managed landscape maintenance service, and confirmation by TRCA Landscape Maintenance Committee.</li> <li>• Manual removal of visible shoots and/or pruning of branches to limit infestation &amp; reduce infection of new trees/shrubs.</li> <li>• <b>HOA is responsible for work &amp; associated cost.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Periodic</b> assessment by HOA-managed landscape maintenance service, and confirmation by TRCA Landscape Maintenance Committee.</li> <li>• Possible manual removal of visible shoots and/or pruning of branches to limit infestation &amp; reduce infection of new trees/shrubs.</li> <li>• <b>HOA is responsible for work &amp; associated cost.</b></li> </ul>
	Heavy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment by knowledgeable landscape personnel.</li> <li>• Severely infested trees to be removed and replaced, optimally with less susceptible species consistent with TRCA approved plant listings.</li> <li>• <b>Homeowner is responsible for work &amp; associated cost.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Periodic</b> assessment by HOA-managed landscape maintenance service, and confirmation by TRCA Landscape Maintenance Committee.</li> <li>• Severely infested trees to be removed and <b>may be</b> replaced if important for erosion control and/or other landscape considerations.</li> <li>• <b>HOA is responsible for work &amp; associated cost.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Periodic</b> assessment by HOA-managed landscape maintenance service, and confirmation by TRCA Landscape Maintenance Committee.</li> <li>• Severely infested trees <b>may be</b> removed and/or replaced if important for erosion control and/or other landscape considerations.</li> <li>• <b>HOA is responsible for work &amp; associated cost.</b></li> </ul>