

WLBC Tree Maintenance and Management

Frequently Asked Questions:

Below are some of our most frequently asked questions relating to tree management and maintenance, that may provide an answer to your query. If you have any other questions or queries, please contact the Tree Officer using the details on the right.

What can I do if a tree/s are too tall or too big?

A tree is not dangerous just because it may be considered too big for its surroundings. Other issues would need to be identified as defined in the Councils Tree Policy for the Council to consider the tree to be dangerous and further action taken by us. You can read the policy here (*insert link*).

What can I do if a tree (or tree's) branches are overhanging onto my property and are causing a nuisance?

You can only consider removing those parts of the tree from the point where they cross the boundary of your property, as long as the tree is not left in an unsafe condition and/or the tree does not die from the works carried out.

You have no legal right to cut or remove any part of a tree that does not overhang your property and are strongly advised to consult a professional tree surgeon for guidance on how best to prune back encroaching trees. We recommend that you tell the owner of the trees what you plan to do. Legally you do not own those parts of the tree that encroach your property, and you should make an offer to return any materials, although these do not have to be accepted.

Before you consider doing any works to the trees you should find out if they are protected by a Tree Preservation Order or if they are in a Conservation Area. If trees are protected, then you will need to gain consent by making an application/give notice to the Council.

For guidance on how to check if the trees are protected and how to make an application please contact the Arboricultural Officer, Russell Critchley at Russell.critchley@westlancs.gov.uk . Protected Trees and applications can be viewed at <https://pa.westlancs.gov.uk/online-applications/>

Will a tree be removed or reduced in height if they drop leaves, sap, blossom, fruit, nuts, or berries onto my property?

The fall of leaves is part of the natural life cycle of trees and cannot be avoided by pruning. Honeydew is caused by greenfly (aphids) feeding on the sap from the leaves and excreting their sugary, sticky waste. Unfortunately, there is little that can be done to remove the aphid which causes the problem. Pruning the tree may only offer temporary relief and any re-growth is often more likely to be colonised by greenfly thereby potentially increasing the problem. Some trees, such as limes, are more prone to attack by greenfly and in some years, greenfly are more common, especially following a mild winter. Honeydew is a natural and seasonal problem. Where new trees are planted, we select tree species that are less likely to generate this problem.

Tree fruit/nut/berries may be a nuisance, but the problem is not considered to be a sufficient reason to remove a tree. If there are suspected poisonous berries and foliage, such cases will be investigated, and appropriate action considered and actioned.

Tree blossom usually heralds the start of spring. Blossom is a natural occurrence, which cannot be avoided by pruning. Roads, streets, or the highway are swept of excessive blossom as necessary.

Will a tree be removed or reduced in height to if there is a problem with bird droppings?

Bird droppings may be a nuisance, but the problem is not considered a sufficient reason to prune or remove a tree. Nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and other related wildlife law).

What if a tree (or trees) interferes with my TV/satellite installation, reception, or telephone wires?

It may be that your satellite or TV provider will be able to suggest an alternative solution to the problem, for example, relocating the aerial/dish or means to boost the signal. If a tree is affecting your telephone wires, your provider may be able to carry out some works on a tree. You should always contact them regarding this.

What can I do if a tree has caused damage to my drains?

Tree roots typically invade drains that are already broken or damaged. Trees themselves very rarely break or damage the drains. Tree roots found in a drain are usually symptomatic of an underlying problem requiring repair of the broken pipe. If you are concerned about the condition of your drains, then you are advised to contact

your water and sewerage company. Householders are usually responsible for the maintenance of the drains within their property.

What if a tree (or trees) is blocking natural light?

A property will not usually benefit from a 'right to light' as trees will naturally create shade at certain times of the day.

Under the Prescriptions Act 1832, a person can only benefit from a 'right to light' if they have enjoyed light to their property for 20 years before the obstruction appeared.

This normally only applies to buildings/structures that block light directly and not trees.

For more information see: [Rights to Light - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

If a tree is blocking natural light, we will only carry out tree works in exceptional circumstances.

What should I do if I think a tree is causing damage to my property?

You are advised to contact your property insurer in the first instance so that you may discuss your concerns and agree an appropriate course of action. Should you, or those acting on your behalf, wish to make a claim, details can be found by visiting <https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-governance/insurance-making-a-claim.aspx>

What if a hedge is blocking natural light?

If natural light is being blocked by the growth of an evergreen hedge, then action may be taken to reduce the problem under the High Hedges Act, Part 8 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003.

For further information refer to <https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/planning/heritage-and-environment/trees-hedges-and-woodlands/high-hedges.aspx>

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