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Virginia Tech Tree Inspection Procedure

OVERVIEW

Urban trees must be managed by qualified professional arborists to reduce risk, maximize returns on investment, and limit liability.

Planning tree inspections on a scheduled cycle will help identify tree problems before they cause serious harm to the health/structure of a tree and will prevent further risk to the public and property. These inspections are the first step in routine urban forest maintenance and allow the Urban Forestry Team to plan and implement plant health care, pruning, or other mitigation practices before a problem becomes serious; this program will maximize urban forest value while reducing risk on Virginia Tech properties.

Some tree inspections must happen after extreme weather events or other disturbances that may impact the urban forest and before scheduled social/cultural activities that may change occupancy rates at specific sites. While these inspections are not scheduled, staff and resources must be allocated to facilitate this work as needed.

GOALS

This procedure:

- shall accompany the development of the Virginia Tech Tree Policy
- shall provide high-quality arboriculture practice on Virginia Tech's properties
- shall ensure the Virginia Tech Core Campus Tree Inventory remains up to date
- shall allow the Urban Forestry Team to mitigate risk in a timely manner
- shall optimize the value of trees on Virginia Tech properties

PROPOSED SPECIFICATIONS

Qualified Practitioners:

All tree inspections shall be performed by an ISA Certified Arborist or an arborist with ISA qualifications that surpass the Certified Arborist standard, within the office of the Urban Forestry Team or as contracted by the Team as necessary.

Inspection Interval:

All trees on Virginia Tech property described as young, immature, and overmature in the Core Campus Inventory shall be inspected every 4 years. More frequent inspections may be required as needed and requested through VT Repair or contact with the Urban Forestry Team.

All trees on Virginia Tech property described as mature in the Core Campus Inventory shall be inspected every 5 years. More frequent inspections may be required as needed and requested through VT Repair or by contacting the Urban Forestry Team.

Any trees that are known to require more frequent maintenance, i.e. trees with structural support systems, lightning protection systems, plant health care treatments, or other conservation programs shall be inspected annually. More frequent inspections may be required as needed and requested through VT Repair or by contacting the Urban Forestry Team.

In the event of a damaging storm or other impactful disturbance and before social/cultural events that increase occupancy rates at specific sites, as needed inspections should be scheduled.

Every tree inspection shall have a preventative maintenance work order filed so the inspection history, labor, and resources are recorded for asset management. Please see the Virginia Tech Tree Work Order Procedure.

Tree Inspection Protocol:

All tree inspections shall conform to the ANSI Z133 and ANSI A300 standards.

All tree inspections shall have a preventative work order filed with the tree ID logged.

Tree inspections should begin with a review of the tree's location and previous service history in the Core Campus Tree Inventory and Hokieserve. Tree inspection date, status, and maintenance history shall be updated during the inspection. Further update to the inventory shall be done following the Virginia Tech Tree Inventory Update Procedure.

The site should be assessed for safety before the arborist approaches the tree; evidence of stinging/biting insect activity, hanging branches, cracks in the tree, or other abnormalities should be noted and considered before the arborist enters close proximity to the tree.

The arborist shall identify the tree species and visually inspect the site for biotic/abiotic pests/stresses and conditions inhospitable to tree health and growth.

The tree's root collar and trunk flare shall be inspected, if the root collar is not visible, a work order for root collar excavation should be filed.

The stem of the tree should be visually inspected for abnormalities that may require further assessment.

The crown of the tree shall be inspected for pruning needs and structural problems that may require mitigation. Evidence of dieback in the crown may be related to root damage and should be investigated further with aerial maps and witness interviews. Remarkable evidence of dieback may require further assessment.

Foliage, buds, and stem growth shall be assessed for evidence of vitality and stress. Remarkable evidence of poor/altered tree condition may require further assessment.

If further tree health assessment is necessary, samples may be collected from the tree or site for analysis at a later date. Follow-up inspection shall resume after sample analysis; pruning, mulching, plant health care, or other arboriculture practices may be prescribed.

If further structure or condition assessment is necessary, a tree risk assessment should be performed by an ISA Qualified Tree Risk Assessor, see Virginia Tech Tree Risk Assessment Procedure.

In the event that a tree health assessment, tree risk assessment, or pruning/removal/treatment is required, a corrective maintenance work order shall be filed. Please see Virginia Tech Tree Work Order Procedure.

PROJECTED OUTCOMES

Virginia Tech's urban canopy is of great value and is subjected to various biotic and abiotic pressures/stressors. Each tree in the canopy (and the site where it grows) must be managed individually to limit risk and maintain tree vitality, sound structure, and sustainability. This procedure will ensure tree inspections are performed as needed to prevent loss of value and manage risk.