

Rule for Maintaining Landscaping in Front Yards

The appearance of home front yards says a lot about a community and affects all our property values. The overarching Rule for maintaining yards is expressed in Hiddenbrooke's Covenant Conditions, and Restriction – "All new and existing landscaping shall be maintained in a "clean, attractive, and well-kept condition through regular trimming, mowing, watering and fertilization". This document contains the currently adopted Rules that apply to maintaining front yards. They are listed below under various headings along with the applicable section of the Hiddenbrooke Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC&Rs) and Design Guidelines (DG).

General

-Hiddenbrooke strives to maintain a green, park-like look. The objective is to have 60% of the landscaped portion of a front yard covered with green vegetation (DG L – 19). The landscaped area excludes driveways, sidewalks, and other hardscape.

-Areas of bare ground should be vegetated and/or covered with mulch, except that large areas of only mulch and bark are not allowed (CC&R 6.2)

-Trees, shrubs and plantings shall be trimmed so that they shall not overhang or encroach upon, above, or below any other Lot, sidewalk or street (CC&R 6.2)

Shrubs

-Shrubs should be neatly trimmed on a regular basis (CC&R 6.2)

-Dead or dying shrubs should be promptly replaced (CC&R 6.3.2)

Lawns

-When not in a declared drought emergency, lawns should be watered (CC&R 6.2) and lawns that are brown or have brown areas are not acceptable

-Lawns should be kept free of weeds (CC&R 4.30)

-Lawns should be regularly mowed and fertilized (CC&R 6.2)

Weeds

- Each owner is responsible for weed abatement on their Lot both for aesthetic reasons and to avoid creating a fire hazard (CC&R 4.30)

-Owners of vacant lots need to have weeds removed before the fire season and will be subject to HPOA as well as City penalties if weed abatement is not performed

-All weeds need to be collected to avoid being blown into adjacent lots or the street (CC&R 4.30)

Xeriscape (Drought Tolerant Landscaping)

-Xeriscape yards, while generally low maintenance, do need attention. Plants that die need to be replaced on a regular basis so the yard does not become sparse looking and maintains an attractive overall appearance (CC&R 6.3.2)

Trees

-The maintenance of all trees on a Lot is the responsibility of the owner (CC&R 6.3.3)

-No mature tree in the front yard shall be removed without HARC approval (CC&R 6.3.3)

As a reminder, newly planted trees need regular deep watering the first couple of years to establish themselves

-Owners may not “top” a street tree in a manner that will permanently damage the structure and appearance of the tree (CC&R 6.3.3). “Topping” is defined as the removal of the upper portion of a tree’s trunk and main branches with a horizontal cut which significantly alters the tree’s shape and exposes the tree to disease. Topping is subject to fines pursuant to the HPOA list of violations subject to fines.

-For street trees, owners shall maintain a 10 ft. clearance over sidewalks and 14 ft. clearance over the street (CC&R 6.2 and City of Vallejo regulation)



Bark/ Mulch/Rock

-Replenishing bark: Bark and mulch improve the appearance of a yard and help retain moisture in the soil for plants. Use of bark/mulch is not a substitute for restoring vegetation that has died or for replacing lawns (DG L-19)

-Bark should be a natural color, brown or black (DG L-19a). Red bark is not allowed. (DG L-19c). Decomposed granite is also allowed.

- For fire prevention, bark should not be placed right up against the structure of a home or should be treated with fire retardant. (DG L-19b)

-Rocks in the front yard can be used as an accent feature but not as a cover for large areas of ground (DG L-19)

-White rock and lava rock are not allowed (DG L-19c). Gravel, including pea gravel, is not allowed in a front yard (DG L-19d)

Other Related Requirements for Front Yards

The following are additional rules that apply to front yards.

-Hardscape (concrete driveways, paths, sidewalks, walls, etc.): These items are part of the front yard landscaping and need to be maintained, including borders for landscaped areas such as concrete, rock, and bender board

-Artificial Turf: Artificial turf must be properly maintained and owners will need to repair any rips, rodent damage, weed infiltration, deterioration or discoloration over time (CC&R 6.1 and DG L-25d)

-Irrigation Systems: These systems should be monitored on a regular basis to ensure adequate water is being delivered to plants and lawns (DG L-8H)

-Fences: Any repair or replacement of a fence facing the street must match the original style and that which is found in the neighborhood (DG L-5c). Fence stain colors must be reviewed and approved by HARC (DG A-2-5c)

-Mailbox Replacement: Mailbox replacements are to be black (DG L-16b) and mailboxes that share a common post should be the same type and size (DG L-16b)

-Adding Pots to a Front Yard: Pots with plants are to be used as accents and not as prominent features of a yard (CC&R 8.1.6 and DG L-19f)

HARC approval is needed for any major new accent features such as sculptures, fountains, large decorative pots, and lawn furniture typically found in backyards.

-Stored Items in Front Yards: In order to maintain a clean, uncluttered look, front yards should not be used to store trash cans or debris (CC&R 4.17) or for storing any equipment, household or yard items

-Backyards that are visible from the street are like a front yard in terms of their public visibility and should be landscaped

Enforcement of These Rules

The Rules above have been adopted by a vote of the community and/or Board action. As such they are enforceable by the Board. A violation that has existed for five years or more from the time the Board should have become aware of the violation through reasonable diligence cannot be enforced under the principle of the statute of limitations.

HARC Approval: HARC approval for landscaping improvements cannot be granted if the applicant is not in good standing. Good standing for these purposes means the applicant is current on with their assessments.