

TURF REMOVAL CHECKLIST – BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR TREE PROTECTION

The recent passage of AB 356 requires the removal of non-functional grass by 2027. This action will have a tremendous impact on non-residential properties. The existing mature trees within a landscape are the most valuable component and they should be protected during turf removal projects. Provide the trees sufficient irrigation to support them both during the process and afterwards for the long term.

To ensure that the landscape is sustainable consider the following:

- Visit www.snwa.com/rebates/wsl/index.html to see if your project qualifies for the turf elimination rebate and to apply for consideration prior to initiating any work.
- Select a licensed, insured contractor that has the experience and qualifications.
- Assess the property to determine the quantity of turf to be removed.
- Assess the tree population to determine the current health and condition of each specimen. Consider the removal of weak or older trees that might not survive the transition. An arborist will be able to help you make these determinations.
- Prior to starting work, develop a work plan or set of specifications to protect the trees identified for retention.
- Protect trees during the project. Consider placing a fence around each tree to prevent tree root damage and to eliminate soil compaction. If possible, the fence should extend out the edge of the tree crown. This is called the tree protection zone.
- Remove undesirable trees prior to the start of other work. All remaining trees shall be preserved and protected.
- Provide adequate irrigation to the protected trees during the duration of the project.
- Kill the existing turf with the use of non-selective herbicides. Do NOT use equipment to strip off valuable topsoil. Once the grass is dead, simply scalp the turf down to bare dirt.
- Conduct any modifications to the landscape (install new trees, shrubs, boulders).
- Install sufficient irrigation for each retained tree that will provide 60 to 70% of the water that the irrigation supplied to the turf. Design the irrigation to provide a sufficient number of emitters extending over the entire root protection zone. Inline drip tubing is also acceptable.
- Minimize trenching to install the irrigation near and around existing trees. The placement of drip tubing on the soil surface is acceptable near older trees. If possible, place all the older trees on a separate irrigation control valve.
- Minimize equipment use near trees to avoid soil compaction which has an impact on the ability of roots to take up water and nutrients.
- Place decorative rock mulch over the drip tubing.
- Monitor the irrigation system closely to ensure that existing trees and new landscape plants are receiving the appropriate amount of water.

Professionals such as landscape architects, qualified designers, and certified arborists can help you along the way with the landscape and irrigation design, development of specifications, conducting assessments, and quality control inspections. The desired outcome is the elimination of turf to conserve water without sacrificing the existing trees. A successful project will do both, and hopefully provide an attractive and sustainable landscape for many years to come.

This information is provided courtesy of the Southern Nevada Arborist Group (SNAG), professionals that care about trees. Please visit the SNAG website for more information regarding tree preservation and protection.

