

Town of Nantucket

Draft Viewshed Management Guidelines

The Town of Nantucket Conservation Commission finds that the proper maintenance of vegetation is needed to protect wildlife, wildlife habitat, resiliency, erosion control, flood control, recreation, and wetland scenic views.

When a proposed activity involves the altering of a Buffer Zone, the Commission shall presume the Buffer Zone is significant to the protection of all the resource values protected by the Bylaw. These presumptions may be overcome only upon a clear showing that the Buffer Zone does not play a role in the protection of those interests. No work will be permitted in the Buffer Zone that has a significant adverse impact upon the interests given above and only upon a specific written determination to that effect by the Commission.

Vista Pruning/Cutting in these guidelines refers to the selective cutting of vegetation within a resource area or resource area buffer zone to improve a view through a pre-determined vista corridor. This activity does not include the cutting of trees to less than 90% of the existing crown cover or mowing or removal of understory brush.

No new vista cutting is allowed without first receiving a permit from the Nantucket Conservation Commission. Once permitted the view corridor may be maintained in keeping with these guidelines. Any existing areas being maintained for viewshed purposes shall be do so in keeping with these guidelines.

No work is allowed within resource areas without a permit. Viewshed management outside of the 50' setback may qualify as a minor activity.

Maintenance pruning is not allowed within resource areas. Exception being the maintenance of vegetation along public pedestrian access ways.

Properties located only within Land Subject to Coastal Storm Flowage are exempt from these guidelines.

General Guidelines

1. Each residential structure shall be allowed one viewshed corridor. Corridors may be no more than 15 feet from top to bottom and shall be 20 wide on the end closest to the structure and 25 feet on the resource area side of the corridor.
2. Should the lot contain more than one structure viewshed corridors must be separated by a minimum of 25'.
3. Lots open to the public as open space shall be allowed one corridor for every 100 linear feet of buffer zone/resource area.
4. Clear cutting is prohibited as is the topping of trees.
5. Pruning must preserve vegetative layers, habitat and bio-diversity.

6. No viewshed management shall be done between April 1st and September 30th to protect the breeding season and nesting birds. This time maybe extended by specific request to the Nantucket Conservation Commission.

Layer Specific Guidelines

Trees:

1. No tree greater than 4" DBH (diameter breast height) shall be cut down. Any tree to be removed must be reviewed by Commission staff.
2. Deadwood should be preserved whenever possible as they provide essential foraging and nesting habitat.
3. Should a dead or diseased tree deemed to be a danger by a certified arborist it would be eligible for removal.
4. Should the trees be less than 4" DBH than selective removal maybe authorized by Commission staff following an assessment in the field.
5. No more than 15% of the lower branches of a tree shall be removed.
6. All cut material removal shall be done by hand.
7. Vines that pose a threat to the health of a tree maybe removed by hand.
8. Invasive trees are eligible for removal. If replacement is needed it must be of an appropriate native species.

Shrubs:

1. No shrub shall be cut to a height lower than 4 feet.
2. Shrubs shall be cut to varying heights to mimic natural growth.
3. Shrubs must maintain their natural shape such as fruit and flowers by selecting the optimum height and pruning different branches in different years.
4. Vines impacting the health of the shrub maybe pruned to promote the health of the shrub. All pruning must be by hand.
5. Invasive shrubs are eligible for removal and replacement with appropriate native species.

Groundcover:

1. Disturbance to groundcover is not allowed unless by permit.
2. Maintenance of private pedestrian walkways of less than three feet wide is allowed. Maintenance of public walkways is allowed to the appropriate width based on use. All vegetated walkways should meander to minimize runoff or erosion.