

# Trees – Our Lake’s Natural Defenders

*When the location for Lake Monticello was chosen, the hills and valleys were mostly wooded. As the community grew, initially as a recreational get-away, homes were built within the trees to complement the wooded environment. None of the original residents could have imagined then that the community would evolve into a bedroom community for Charlottesville and beyond.*

*As Lake Monticello became suburbia, owners’ interests leaned more to lawns than woods. They didn’t know that removing trees could endanger more than the wooded nature of the community. But now we know: The greater the number of trees, the greater the likelihood that the waters of the streams, lakes, ponds and the entire watershed will be clearer and cleaner, creating a healthier environment for all of us.*



For many of us, the word “lake” creates a vision of pristine waters in a natural setting with an abundance of trees and wildlife, a place of rest and restoration. But our vision of Lake Monticello has been altered somewhat, especially in recent years. More and more trees are being removed with little or no understanding of the role they play in the maintaining the health of our lake and community.

Trees nurture, protect and heal our environment. There are very few good reasons for removing them. Here are some frequently asked questions with answers that will help clarify the value of trees in our environment.

## Frequently Asked Questions about Trees at Lake Monticello

***What’s so important about trees, and why is LMOA so fussy about retaining them and planting more?***

Not only do trees add to the natural beauty of our community, they also help hold the soil and reduce erosion by absorbing storm water runoff. Due to the increase in impervious surfaces of roofs, streets, parking areas and driveways within and outside Lake Monticello, more soil and sediment are washing into our lake. Trees and other vegetation create a “sponge” effect that reduces the effects of storm water runoff. The more trees and large vegetation, the slower and lower the volume of rainwater moving over the ground, thus reducing the amount of soil that washes into culverts and streams and eventually into the lake. Retaining and adding as many trees and other vegetation as possible are highly effective ways to manage runoff and protect the health and quality of our lake.

***What are the rules about removing trees?***

The LMOA policy manual requires that any tree over 4 inches in diameter may not be cut down or removed without the permission of the Environmental Control Committee (ECC). To determine the size of a tree, put a tape measure around it at a location one foot above the ground. If the circumference is greater than twelve and a half inches, you will need ECC approval to remove the tree. If most of the trees were removed from your lot during construction, LMOA recommends that trees be planted to help restore the “sponge” effect that trees provide.

***What can happen if I don't follow the rules on removing trees?***

The ECC is authorized to refer violations of tree rules to the Compliance Committee, LMOA's judicial body, for a hearing. If the Committee confirms the violation, you may be charged a monetary penalty and required to plant a sizeable replacement.

***What should I do if I see a tree being cut? How do I know if it is an approved removal?***

Trees of 4 inches in diameter may be removed without ECC approval. However, if you see a tree being cut that appears to be larger than the allowable size, call the Environmental Control/Compliance Office at (434) 591-0196 with the address of the tree's location and ask if the removal has been approved.

***How do I get approval to remove a tree?***

The Environmental Control/Compliance Office can provide you with a form and instructions on how to request approval. The form, fee amount and instructions can be found on the LMOA website at [www.lmoa.org](http://www.lmoa.org) under Library, Forms and Applications, ECC Forms.

***What if a tree is dead or damaged?***

If a tree is clearly dead or badly damaged, please call the Environmental Control/Compliance office to notify them of your intent to remove the tree.

***What about pine trees?***

The same rule for tree removal applies to pine trees as to any other trees. Like others trees, the root systems of pines help stabilize the soil and increase water absorption.

***What about stumps?***

Stumps that will remain visible after cutting a tree must be cut down to within six inches of ground level. An alternative to leaving a visible stump is having a tree service grind the stump. LMOA discourages having the entire tree stump removed. The tree's root system can continue to stabilize the soil, even after the tree is gone. This is especially true on banks and slopes.

*This information is brought to you by the Lake Health Education Group,  
working within the LMOA member communications program to support and promote  
the health and welfare of the entire Lake Monticello watershed.*

*If you would like to help create a better understanding of how all residents can help protect our  
lake and its watershed, please consider volunteering with the LMOA Lake Health Education Group.  
Call Ida Swenson at (434) 589-2777 or Peggy Alexander at (434) 589-8263, ext. 111.*

**Lake Monticello Owners' Association**

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**LMOA Environmental Control Office**

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