

# Landscape Maintenance Policy

## The Standard of Care for Crosswoods HOA

(Adopted on March 24, 2010)

### Introduction

The quality of landscaping in Crosswoods HOA is viewed by homeowners, visitors and prospective buyers. It sets the first impression of the overall maintenance of the grounds and facilities in Crosswoods. Therefore, it is important to establish a standard of care for our grounds.

THE OVERALL LANDSCAPE AESTHETIC FOR CROSSWOODS IS A  
“MAINTAINED NATURAL PARK”.

**I. Statement of Purpose:** Establish guidelines which will ensure that present and future Management, together with maintenance staff, promote the desired appearance. Such goals and general guidelines will be defined in this policy document.

The landscape policy is driven by the overall “landscape aesthetic” of the Crosswoods Community as described in the Long Range Master Plan vision for this environment.

This policy:

- Establishes a Standard of Care for our shrubs, trees, lawns, irrigation, and general landscape site conditions
- Gives direction to present and future Boards, Managers, Homeowners and Crews or Contractors regarding intent
- Ensures a desired result by protecting the attractive character of the Crosswoods landscape for owners and future buyers
- Protects structures
- Maintains plant health
- Allows for some individuality near houses within established guidelines

### II. Landscape Types in Crosswoods

**A. Common Areas:** There are two different landscape communities in the Common Areas:

1. Areas containing the Oak Woodland: The common area with this type of plant community has as its goal the appearance of Oak woodland, retaining the wooded character of the original forest as much as possible.

*Guideline: The common area that contains the predominance of Oak woodland will be managed in such a way as to promote the health and general character of this natural area. In this landscape type, the backyards will retain a more natural mulch cover with an occasional understory of smaller shrubs and tree types for accents. Substantial lawn reduction has occurred here and should continue. Plantings should include those that require minimum or very controlled watering.*

The concept here is to promote an understory that has a more natural growth pattern while providing for privacy and vistas. Maintenance should promote these characteristics.

2. Areas Containing Ornamental Landscape Material - This part of the common area contains significant ornamental plantings among a few oaks or where no oaks exist such as the rear areas of courts on the southeast and eastern section of Crosswoods Circle. In this area, oaks are not the major character of the landscape. There is a predominance of ornamental, non-native tree plantings in this portion of the common area that do require some irrigation.

*Guideline: The landscape character that should be promoted here is one of “A Community Park” with a flare toward natural. It should take on a pastoral character with lawns existing only where they can be easily maintained. Due to water-saving needs, heavy tree and shrub growth areas will not include an under cover of lawns. Mulch and scattered accent shrubbery will create the horizontal landscape. New and existing plantings will exist on less water than the original lawn areas have required.*

Water use reduction is a major factor in developing the guidelines for these two landscape types.

Lawns that are over-shaded by the tree cover can be removed, allowing for shorter or less frequent water cycles if remaining shrubs and trees still require minimal water coverage.

#### **B. Residential and Roadway Areas**

The residential and roadway areas are those around the house and deck structures that relate directly to the home. The transition between this area and the full common area varies from house to house. Generally the transition is approximately 3 feet outside those structures.

The roadway plantings are those that impact the margins of the road or walks.

Note: Shrubs near driveways and street intersections will be prioritized and maintained at low enough levels to improve the visibility of oncoming vehicle and pedestrian traffic.

### **III. Standard of Care Policies**

#### **A. Shrub Pruning Policy**

Pruning will promote this “Community Park” character by allowing plants in the common areas to retain their natural growth and appearance, when possible, but allowing for a more manicured pruning result.

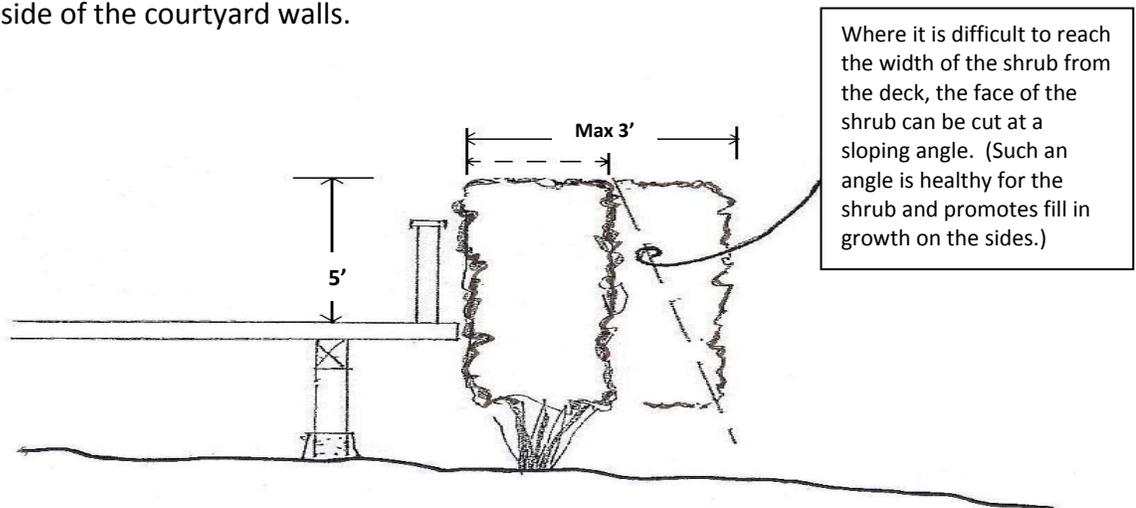
1. In the common areas near homes and garages where plantings are not in direct conflict with deck or house structures, the pruning should be carefully evaluated for its screening value (privacy factor) and general health. These plantings should be pruned only to promote their natural shape and character wherever possible, and to improve crew safety conditions for those plants that need frequent pruning.
2. Plantings adjacent to homes and garages will be pruned as necessary to maintain the following:
  - a. Appropriate air circulation
  - b. Removal of leaf matter at the edge of house foundation
  - c. Height safety for maintenance crews.

Plant clearance is to be 18 inches from the foundation. If the existing plant root base is less than 18 inches, the base portion of the plant should be pruned where feasible and cleaned out as much as possible to allow air circulation. Sprinkler heads will be adjusted to reduce water spray near the siding in these areas. Bubbler heads should be considered.

3. When the goal is to regain an appropriate desired size and function of an overgrown plant, it will be appropriately cut to enhance its health during the season when it is most dormant.
4. If the decision is made to remove and replace shrubs with more appropriate plants, it will be explained to the homeowner. Consideration will be given to privacy issues and alternatives offered.
5. If replacement of a shrub is appropriate, the removal function will be accompanied by replacement of the shrubs within the same project time table whenever possible. New plantings will be placed an appropriate distance from a house foundation or deck area. (See attached diagram on page 4.)
6. Where shrubs have been planted in groupings to appear as a larger shrub mass, or when they have a clean line and shape, special consideration should be given to reducing the pruning. They will not be pruned into “shrub-balls” or topiary sculptured shapes. Limited pruning techniques will reflect the shrubs’ natural branching and growth whenever possible, reducing the labor of excessive pruning. (There are many types - Pittosporum wheelerii is an example of such a plant type.)
7. If the existing conditions of established plants force excessive pruning on each pruning cycle, consideration should be given to reducing maintenance and/or the cost of shrub replacement by:
  - a. Extensively cutting back the shrub to regain a reduced silhouette that is more manageable yet acceptable to the plant’s overall health and ultimate appearance.
  - b. Pruning at the plant’s most dormant season. For most plants in Northern California, that is during winter months and early spring.
8. If plantings have overgrown their location, and the option of pruning them to regain the intended size and a quality appearance is not possible, they should be reviewed by the Landscape Committee and Landscape Supervisor for resolution of an appropriate action.
9. Pruning in Crosswoods will employ professional pruning techniques that enhance the health and the natural character of the shrub or trees.
10. Pruning Cycle/Season (To be expanded)
  - Aesthetics of plants
  - Protect plant health
11. Proposed pruning for typical existing deck side plantings

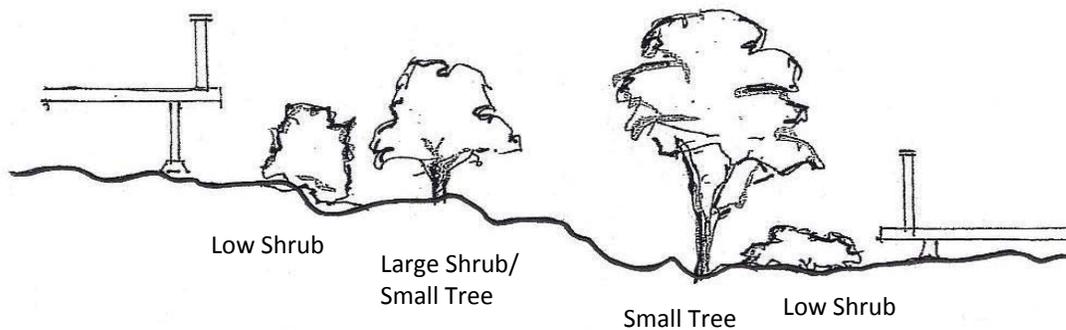
Crosswoods has a significant number of deck shrubs. As they have aged, they have grown to unsafe sizes and heights. Accidents have resulted from the need to use ladders or to reach outside the safe balance of a crew member.

In this situation, the shrub will be pruned at a height of 5 feet above the deck floor and at a width not to exceed a 3 foot reach from the handrail top. A similar detail will be used around the outside of the courtyard walls.



## 12. Privacy Issues and Options

Existing shrub planting near decks often serve as a partial privacy between homes or decks. However, the maintenance function can have safety issues and be costly to prune. This results in extreme cutting or removal to bring it under control.



### Optional Screening methods:

Where screening is desirable between opposite decks, consideration can be given to installing small trees or medium sized shrubs that require minimal care in the common areas. This plant selection should be of the type that can be allowed to attain its natural height and shape while adding to the natural character of the common area. Consider plants that require minimal irrigation.

Other screening options include the possibility of additional permanent privacy wall, i.e. existing privacy walls constructed by original builder. An application must be submitted to the Architectural Control Committee for approval by the Board. See Architectural Rules and Regulations for requirements and fees.

(Note: This section will be expanded to discuss options and related issues.)

## **B. Tree Pruning**

The tree cover in Crosswoods includes a large variety of types. Some are original oaks and others represent 20 and 30 years of ornamental plantings. Trees may require periodical review by an arborist for health and safety. Some trees have been planted for shade, flower, screening or general aesthetics. When reviewing a tree for pruning:

- Determine the function the tree serves and match the pruning technique.
- Trees should have a clearance of their understory of 14 feet above a street.
- The understory of trees in the common area above the lawns will be maintained at 8 feet.
- Trees outside of lawn areas that serve as a privacy screen between homes will be maintained at levels that preserve their purpose.

The following are examples of trees requiring special consideration:

1. Often trees (i.e. Japanese maples) have been planted or may be planted in the future to serve as privacy breaks between homes. Trees serving this function should be carefully evaluated before pruning to promote their purpose.
2. Crape myrtles are an extremely hardy plant and adapt well to extensive pruning. They exist in many sizes and serve several purposes. The frequent use of this tree in Crosswoods serves a variety of functions from medium-sized shrubs to small-sized trees. The pruning technique should vary depending on the function each plant serves. The smaller varieties are typically planted because they flower and may require pruning to promote such. Larger crape myrtles have been planted to take the place of trees that were too big for their location. The intended use was that of a smaller tree option which does not require severe pruning.
3. As natural areas evolve due to lawn reduction, the plantings in these areas will be allowed to take on a more natural growth with a lower branching pattern.
4. Tree removal is sometimes necessary for the health of adjacent trees or for safety reasons. Removal decisions will be discussed with the adjacent homeowners and reviewed by the Landscape Committee to determine appropriate follow-up action, if any.

(Note: May be expanded to discuss oak care and tree thinning options)

## **C. Lawn Maintenance Policy**

The health and definition of lawn areas present the first impression of the landscape quality. Therefore, the lawns require a professional standard of care which includes:

- Reduced lawn to areas that can support a quality lawn, improving the overall appearance and reducing water consumption.
- Seasonal fertilization with organic fertilizer that meets the professional standard of care for Northern California.
- Annual aeration of lawns to improve the penetration of moisture and improved root growth.
- Weed control in the appropriate season using a professional standard grade material and application method.
- Inspection of lawns for moisture buildup prior to mowing with heavy equipment so as to prevent rutting.

- Proper mowing height standards, ensuring a healthy lawn and water reduction.
- The riding mowers will not be used on the small lawn areas or where compaction of soil results.
- A clearly defined edge between the lawn and the natural or mulched areas.
- Continual monitoring of water coverage and consumption to ensure conservation.

(This section will be expanded as we develop a program for systematic lawn removal and associated maintenance expectations.)

#### **D. Irrigation Maintenance**

Sprinkler systems in Crosswoods will require continual upgrading to achieve appropriate water application of the defined healthy lawn areas. To achieve this goal, the development of a proactive program should include:

1. Monitoring of the irrigation system when in use to ensure coverage and reduction in runoffs and leaks.
2. Upgrading the controller and electronic systems to improve water savings.
3. Upgrading irrigation heads to achieve appropriate coverage for their designated areas.
4. Continual review of methods to reduce water usage.
5. Prompt repair of sprinkler malfunctions. Watering will be done manually to ensure the health of the plantings whenever repairs are delayed.
6. Coordination between irrigation schedules and maintenance and/or construction projects during temporary shut down periods, so as to provide adequate watering.

(Note: This section will be filled out as we progress with the irrigation reduction)

#### **E. Planting**

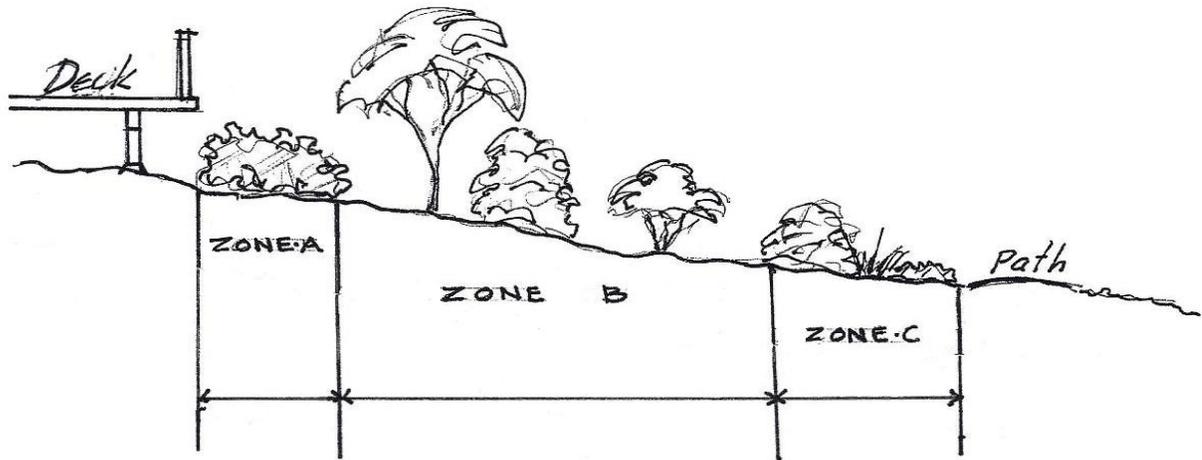
New or replacement planting should consider future maintenance requirements and reduced pruning. Water savings should also be given serious consideration.

Large areas of Crosswoods where water and lawn have been significantly reduced will be considered for random planting of drought-tolerant shrubs and trees to create interesting vistas and accents or to provide desirable screening. Pruning will respect the purpose of the planting goals.

The Rules for the Crosswoods HOA, passed November 12, 2009, including the approved plant list will be the guide for plant selection options. All plant placements will be reviewed by the Landscape Committee and Manager.

(This section will be expanded to meet the future decisions on irrigation reductions)

The following is a diagram of the various zone locations, definitions and examples of plant type.



Examples:

Light Condition	Zone A	Zone B	Zone C
Sun	i.e. Abelia	i.e. Crape Myrtle	i.e. Creeping Cotoneaster
Part Shade	i.e. Tobiria	i.e. Japanese Maple	i.e. Meyers Asparagus
Shade	i.e. Cast iron plant	i.e. Compact Myrtle	i.e. Wheelerii

**Zone A:** Includes most of the common areas immediately behind the homes. These are areas that require extensive pruning around decks and have resulted in the greatest pruning expense. New planting(s) within five (5) feet of the deck or structure require consideration for pruning requirements that can generally be reached from the ground level. Plant placement should allow for good air circulation near the walls.

**Zone B:** Includes the bulk of the common area, predominantly behind units, where the canopy of tree cover has screened sunlight and impacted soil with roots. As the HOA moves forward with reducing irrigation requirements, this zone will phase into mulched and accent planting areas with limited water needs. This area is usually large enough to accommodate the installation of larger plants that can assist in screening needs and provide accents under the canopies of trees. The intent is to select plants that will grow naturally without extensive pruning requirements.

**Zone C:** Is within approximately a twenty (20) foot width bordering the pathways. Random planting along the paths will add interest and accent to areas where irrigation was removed. Plants will be selected that require minimum pruning and reduced water needs.

(See 'Resource Section' of Crosswoods Rules & Regulations for the 'List of Acceptable Trees, Shrubs and Groundcovers.')

## F. General Clean Up

The overall Standard of Care for Crosswoods should provide an appearance of "quality maintenance". It is expected that general clean up is on going, not just part of the weekly cycle of mowing or based on the pruning schedule. As plants become damaged, or finish their seasonal growing cycle and die back, they should be cut back to present a manicured appearance.

Lawn edges should be well defined and maintained. Lawn restoration should be addressed regularly. Debris, other than leaves, will be regularly monitored and removed from the lawns quickly and prior to mowing. Streets and paths should be monitored daily to ensure they are free of trash.

## **G. Dead Plant Removal**

1. Since the original development of Crosswoods, many microclimates have evolved as a result of tree growth and cover. Also, many plants have been crowded out by neighboring plants or simply died of old age.

Dead or unhealthy plants should be removed under the direction of the Landscape Supervisor as soon as possible. The Landscape Supervisor should record the removal and submit a recommendation for possible replacement to the Landscape Committee for their concurrence.

2. Special Conditions:

(Note: This section is still in development. Purpose: To explain options for such things as: replacement of lawn section in front yards where it may need to be removed due to tree root competition or adjacent use conflicts. It will also include discussion of mulch, planting or rock application.)

## **IV. Homeowner Education**

The following methods can be used:

1. Reporter articles
2. Presentation at appropriate workshops
3. Landscape meetings
4. Specific homeowner area demonstration spots  
(Subject to additions)

## **V. Reviews**

To ensure that the desired landscape quality and character is achieved and maintained the Landscape Committee will review:

- A. Seasonal trimming during the pruning cycle and report to Supervisor, HOA Manager, or Board if appropriate, of necessary adjustments.
- B. Confirm selection of appropriate plants to replace where pruning issues justify removal.

The landscape pruning policy will be used by the Manager and Supervisor to help establish appropriate pruning schedules, appearance expectations and options for privacy issues.

## **VI. Landscape Maintenance Manual**

The Manager and Landscape Supervisor will develop a landscape manual for present and future users, which will identify methods of achieving the goals outlined in the preceding Standard of Care document.

This manual will detail the basic needs, expectation and procedures, schedules, etc. of the landscape service fulfilling that function. It should be prepared and recorded in such a format that it can also be used by future Managers and Supervisors as well as understood by the rotation of Board Members and Landscape Committee Members.

## **VIII. Education of Crew or Contractors Regarding Standard of Care Goals**

- Training by Supervisors
- Training Resources

(The above to be expanded)