

THE RIGHT TREE IN THE RIGHT PLACE

Utility companies recognize that trees and vegetation are important to a thriving environment in a variety of ways. However, trees and shrubs may interfere with the safe and reliable operation of the electrical system, causing a significant portion of inconvenient and costly interruptions of electrical service. To minimize these outages and reduce potential safety hazards, utility companies must control vegetation in the proximity of power lines. Before planting trees or shrubs on your property, ensure that you are planting the right tree in the right place.

LOCATION OF TREES AND SHRUBS

When planting, it is important to check for overhead and underground power lines, since physical contact with power lines can cause serious injury or death. Before you start to dig, call your local utility company to locate underground power lines.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT TREE OR SHRUB

Selecting the appropriate tree or shrub and the right planting location will help to prevent the need for future trimming or removal of the tree due to vegetation and power line conflicts. When purchasing a tree or shrub, enquire about its maximum height and width at maturity. Soil conditions, drainage, and available sunlight should also be considered. Outlined below are 3 vegetation zones associated with utility corridors.

TALL TREE ZONE

The Tall Tree Zone is located outside the right-of way. However, trees should be set back far enough that they do not encroach on the right-of way when they are mature. The taller and wider the tree at maturity, the farther back it should be planted from the edge of the right-of- way. For example, if a tree can grow to 10 metres, is should be planted more than 10 metres back from the right-of way.

For information on plants native to our region, call your local nursery or see the Northern Ontario Plant Database Website: www.northernontarioflora.ca

BORDER ZONE

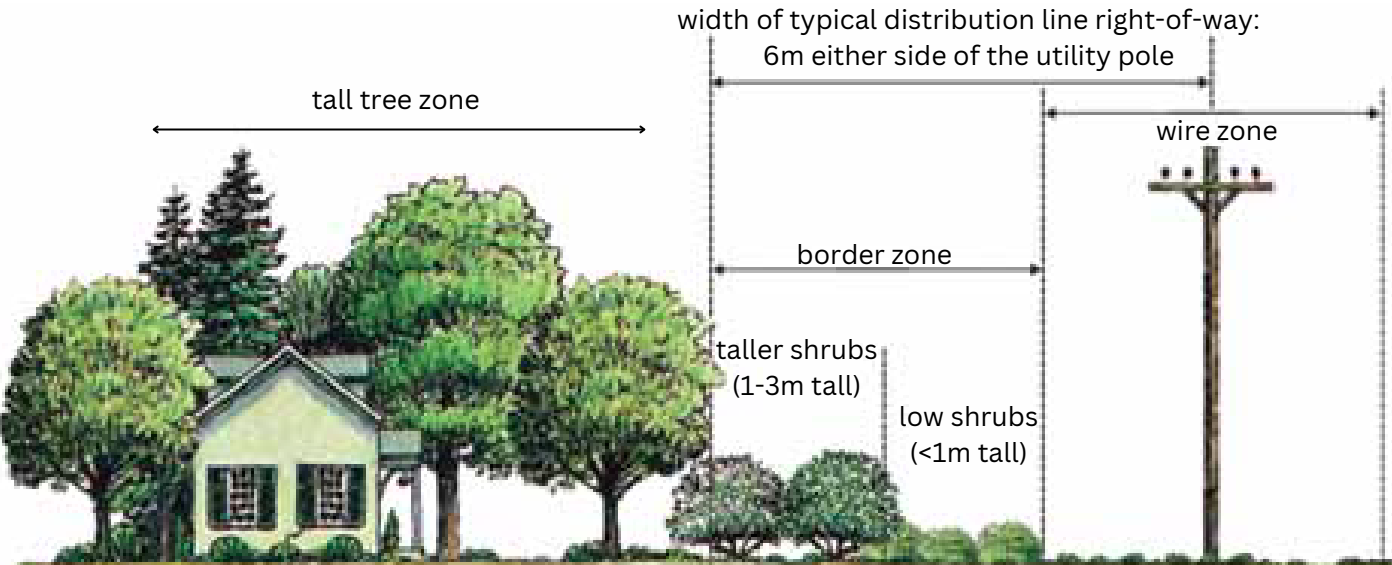
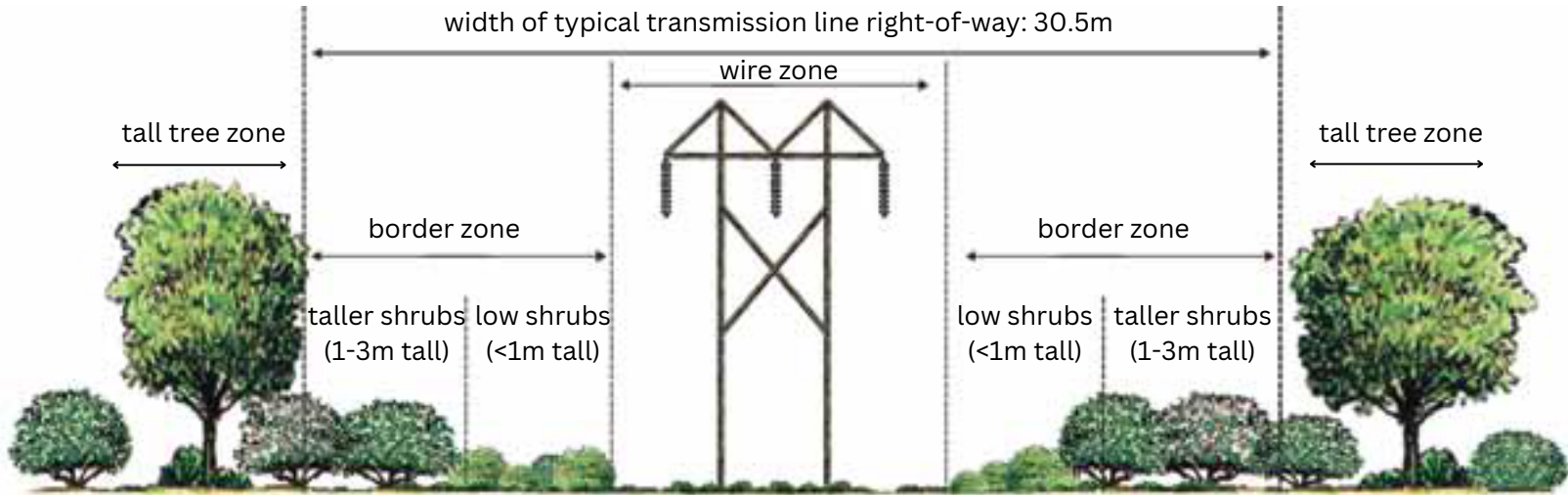
The Border Zone extends from the Wire Zone to the edge of the right-of way. Shrubs up to 3 metres tall can be grown at the outer edge of the border zone, while shrubs that grow no taller than 1 metre can be planted closer to the Wire Zone. Medium-size shrubs (1.5 to 2 m tall) can be grown between the low and taller shrubs. Remember, the closer to the power line (Wire Zone), the shorter the shrub.

WIRE ZONE

The Wire Zone includes the entire area directly beneath and between the power lines farthest out on the pole and extends 3 metres on each side. Plants in this zone may be disturbed during line maintenance work and/or may impede workers during emergency restoration efforts. Avoid planting trees or shrubs directly under power lines or within a 5 metre radius around distribution poles and transmission structures. Within this zone, only low-growing vegetation, to 50 cm tall, should be planted.

DANGER TREES

Trees that are dead, decaying, leaning towards power lines, or growing close to power lines may be danger trees. When tree branches grow into or come in contact with hydro wires, they can cause fires, power outages and can become safety hazards. If trimming or removal is required, the work will be performed by a qualified utility arborist. It is dangerous and illegal to work within the minimum distance from power lines if you are not properly trained and qualified.



Diagrams modified with permission from *The Right Tree in the Right Place*© Arbor Day Foundation. <http://www.arborday.org/trees/righttreeandplace/righttree.cfm>

VEGETATION CONTROL AND THE RIGHT-OF-WAY

For your information, here are some facts about our right-of-way (ROW) strategy:

- The goal of our vegetation control program is to cultivate a low-growing community of compatible vegetation on our ROW.
- Brush (less than 15 cm diameter at chest height) will be controlled on the ROW. A typical width for a distribution system is 5 meters each side of the power line and for a transmission system 15 meters either side of the centre-line. Please refer to the typical transmission and distribution ROW diagrams on this poster. Brush can be chipped in the proximity of residences or roads; otherwise brush may be cut and scattered or piled along the edge of the ROW.
- Trees (greater than 15 cm diameter at chest height) will be trimmed using arboricultural methods, encouraging strong branch growth away from dangerous power lines for a 3-year period. Trees that are dead, dying, or pose a risk to the power lines will be removed. Wood greater than 15 cm may be piled and is the responsibility of the landowner to remove for their use. Branches may be chipped or piled along the edge of the ROW.
- Vegetation control is conducted on a 3-year cycle; however, in some cases persistent outages or line upgrades require that “off-cycle” work be executed on smaller areas of concern.

Utility companies take vegetation clearance very seriously. Here are some references for line clearance standards: North American Electric Reliability Corporation: www.nerc.com; Independent Electricity System Operator: www.ieso.ca; Electrical Safety Authority: www.esasafe.com; and Canadian Standards Association: www.csa.ca.