

Resource Protection Area (RPA) Guidance for Sight Lines

In order to maintain the functional value of the buffer area, existing vegetation may be pruned or removed, subject to approval by the local government, only to provide for reasonable sight lines. Trees may be pruned or removed as necessary to provide for reasonable sight lines and vistas, provided that where removed, they shall be replaced with other vegetation that is equally effective in retarding runoff, preventing erosion, and filtering nonpoint source pollution from runoff. In order for the buffer to function as intended, it should contain the full complement of vegetation that includes all trophic layers: shade trees, understory trees, shrubs, and ground cover, whether the groundcover is vegetation, leaf litter, or mulch. In addition to the requirements within the County Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance Appendix B-1 (https://library.municode.com/va/isle_of_wight_county/codes/code_of_ordinances), the following requirements shall be applied to all requests:

1. The applicant must be the actual owner of the property.
2. Considerations for sight lines are only permitted after a house is constructed and occupied.
3. A Resource Protection Area (RPA) Modification Request Application along with the required fee must be submitted
4. Photographs and a site or conceptual plan depicting the approximate location of the sight line footprint and the location, species, and size of the proposed tree(s)/shrub(s) to be pruned, limbed up, or removed shall be submitted with the application. An entire trophic layer should not be removed.
5. Requests for the removal of trees or shrubs requires submission of a replanting plan following the guidelines found in Appendix D, Vegetative Replacement Standards, of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality's [Riparian Buffers Modification & Mitigation Manual](#).
6. Replacement trees and shrubs shall be native species with trees being a minimum of 1" - 1-1/2" caliper and shrubs shall be a minimum 3'-4' in height (See [Appendix A](#) for suggested vegetation for replacement and [Appendix D](#) for suggested replacement rates)
7. A landscaping agreement and surety may be required to guarantee the replanting.

STEPS TO CREATE SIGHT LINES

- **Choose a sight line from the house to the water.**
- **Select vegetation for pruning.**
- **Prepare plan for pruning, removal and restoration.**
- **Mark vegetation proposed for pruning or removal.**
- **Notify local government for site visit and plan review.**
- **Receive local government approval prior to any action in the buffer.**
- **Prune or limb up trees and shrubs per approved plan.**
- **Remove approved vegetation.**
- **Replace woody vegetation per approved replanting plan.**

A GOOD SIGHTLINE CLEARING

- Achieves a filtered view through vegetation.
- Retains all trophic layers.
- Replaced any removed vegetation with woody vegetation of equal value.
- Uses appropriate native vegetation.



THIS!

Example of a good sightline towards the water. All trophic levels are retained, yet a clear framed view of the water is achieved.

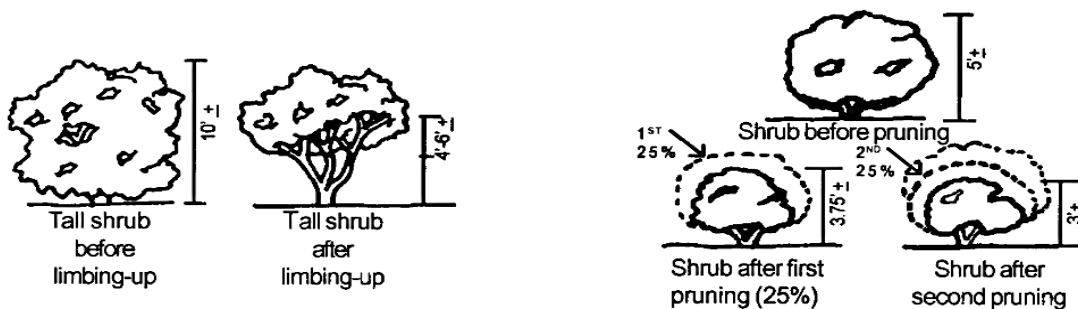
UNACCEPTABLE PRACTICES

- Clear-cutting any area within the buffer.
- Removal of a complete trophic layer.
- Removal or disturbance of groundcover, be it vegetation, mulch, leaf litter, or woody debris.
- Conversion of groundcover plants or leaf litter to lawn.



NOT THIS!!

Entire understory and groundcover has been removed. The woody vegetation has not been replaced.



PRUNING

- Prune shrubs down to a minimum of 3' or limb up
- Do not remove more than 25% of any plant at one time to assure plant survivability.¹

Source: Chapter 3, Riparian Buffers Modification & Mitigation Manual, Virginia DCR 2006