

## Tree Policy and Management on De Zalze

**Background:** The street trees on De Zalze are about 15 years old and have reached or are reaching maturity. All were planted by the developer with the objective of giving the development an improved aesthetic in the inception phase. Most of these trees are not optimal for the places and spaces that they have been placed in.

Some trees like the London Planes if left to grow unhindered can reach up to 40 m in a hundred years e.g. the plane tree avenue in the Pietermaritzburg botanical gardens which was planted in 1906 and where the trees are now over 40 m high. The Quercus Nigra (water oaks) which are North American natives can also become very large. The latter seem to have a shorter lifespan than the plane trees however, in the USA living to about 30 years.

This creates challenges to managing their wide-spread root systems, continuous pruning of branches to allow for large vehicle access. In shady and semi-shady areas indigenous summer rainfall plants can be planted, although these are not endemic species specific to our area.

We have been advised by both our consulting botanist Charlie Boucher as well as our consulting landscape architect Patrick Watson that over time some of the exotic street trees should be replaced with smaller indigenous varieties like the yellow wood, wild olive and white stinkwood. The wild olive which is the local tree for our area specifically grows in clumps along riverine pathways and PW has suggested that the golf Club plant thousands of these in groups along the golf course and riverine area where they will do far better than some of the trees that are currently planted. Also some of the wider beds in the village gardens can be planted with groups or clumps of wild olives. This is in line with the EMP conditional requirement to rehabilitate our natural spaces with endemic species.

Healthy street trees which are not problematic, will not be removed. Over time however as the exotic street trees get larger they will start to present us with more problems that will need to be resolved either by pruning and root pruning or by replacement with indigenous trees. Already there are a number of the street trees that are sick and stunted, some having been badly planted to begin with, some are planted too close together and are growing into each other, some have been badly pruned over the years leaving them unsightly and unbalanced and some are nuisance trees causing lifting of some driveways.

Root pruning will in future where necessary be carried out by the HOA maintenance team. Repairs to driveways will be carried out by a preferred contractor. Major tree pruning will be recommended by the LEAG and approved by the landscape architect and performed by a professional arborist. Where deemed suitable an indigenous tree may replace an exotic tree.

Where there are street trees that need to be replaced it will have to be done in sections, with semi mature trees and in an aesthetically pleasing manner. Currently we are propagating indigenous plants and trees in our nursery which we are going to significantly

expand. A lot of these seedlings will be planted out in the wild and in our village gardens. We cannot however replace mature exotic trees with seedlings.

A street tree audit has been conducted by residents and LEAG members. All street trees were counted and sick, problem or stunted trees noted. It appears as though we are looking at about 10% of street trees being problematic. Our consulting landscape architect will propose areas for replacement over time with suitable, good sized indigenous trees. This will also form part of our dedication to water wise gardening and to saving the cost of tree management because of the size of exotic trees ie the pruning of branches and root pruning which has been significant.

The routine trimming of trees by Servest, (up to 2.5m) will continue as per normal schedules.