

November 3, 2025
Workshop
Depot Park Landscaping Proposal

The workshop was called to order at 3:00 p.m. by Mayor Leonard Tartt. In attendance: Tartt, Westmark, Lewis, and McClendon.

In attendance were several members of the Depot Park Wildflower Committee. Lynn Artz spoke on their behalf.

Public Works Director Seth Green and Lynn Artz each presented the Council with proposals for guidelines and maintenance standards (attached).

Following a lengthy discussion, Councilwoman Westmark was asked to combine the two proposals and bring a unified document to the meeting on November 10, for Council consideration.

With no further business, the workshop adjourned at 4:33 p.m.

City Landscaping Guidelines – Summary

Tree Trimming

- Non-privacy trees will be trimmed to a height of roughly **7 feet** for safety and accessibility.
- Privacy trees will be trimmed to prevent **encroachment into established open space**.

New Plantings

- Any new plants placed in established open spaces must be **approved by city staff and/or the city council**.

Fence Borders

- A clear border of **18 to 24 inches** must be maintained around fences and structures to allow for maintenance.

City Buildings

- **No plants** are permitted on city-owned buildings or structures.

Vines

- Vines will be **removed** if they pose a risk to trees or cannot be properly maintained.

Thorned Plants

- Thorned plants are **prohibited near entrances and high-traffic areas**.

Liability & Safety

- Any condition deemed a **liability or safety issue** by city staff will be addressed **immediately and without prior notice**.

Maintenance

- All maintenance tasks listed above will be performed by **city staff on an as-needed basis**, without advance notice.

City Landscaping Guidelines – Summary City of Sopchoppy Maintenance Standards for Depot Park

Tree Trimming

Non-privacy trees will be trimmed to a height of roughly 7 feet for safety and accessibility. Topped?
Privacy trees will be trimmed to prevent encroachment into established open space.

(Alternative)

Tree Pruning

Tree limbs and branches within ~7 feet of the ground surface may not extend into the vertical space above sidewalks, asphalt paths, & grass paths.

The lower limbs of trees, shrubs, and palms bordering or within the grass lawn will be pruned in a natural manner consistent with a) their natural form/shape, b) age/height/diameter, and c) purpose (e.g., screening) on an as needed basis to minimize encroachment into lawn space.

Trees and shrubs planted within the native plant gardens or landscaping will be pruned by volunteers at proper pruning times.

Tree pruning will follow the recommendations of the American Society of Arborists (ASA).

New Plantings

Any new plants placed in established open space must be approved by city staff and/or the City Council.

(Alternative)

Any new plants placed within the grass lawn of the park must be approved by the City Council.

Any new plants placed within the routinely mowed area of the woods must be approved by the City Council.

The intentional preservation of volunteer trees and shrubs will be guided by tree canopy goals, plant replacement needs, and species suitability at the direction of the City Council.

Native Plant Gardens

Any change in the layout or reduction in the size of the volunteer-maintained native plant gardens and landscaping (e.g., by clearcutting, mowing, plant removal) must be approved by the City Council.

Fence Borders

A clear border of 18-24 inches must be maintained around fences and structures to allow for maintenance.

(Alternative)

A clear border of 18 inches must be maintained along fences to allow for maintenance.

City staff will

- A. Cut back to ground level annually during the winter season (December & January) any vegetation within 18" of the north, west, & east fences.

B. Place a thick layer of pine straw mulch onto the 18" cleared strip along the north & west fences soon after clearing.

C. Allow deciduous wildflowers that emerge outside the 18" cleared strip but lean into the space or against the north fence to remain and flower during the growing season until they die back in the fall/winter UNLESS access to the north fence is needed sooner (in which case they may be cut back).

D. Allow any deciduous passionflower vines that emerge near and climb the west fence to remain and flower during the growing season until they die back in the fall/winter UNLESS access to the west fence is needed sooner (in which case they may be cut back and removed).

Volunteers will monitor the 18" strip along the north fence and remove seedlings, suckers, and weeds that emerge through the pine straw mulch between the annual December-January clearing by city staff.

City Buildings

No plants are permitted on city-owned buildings or structures.

(Addition)

A clear border of 18-24 inches must be maintained around city-owned buildings and structures to allow for maintenance.

Vines

Vines will be removed if they pose a risk to trees or cannot be properly maintained.

OMIT?

(Alternative)

Ornamental native vines will be permitted to grow on park trees as they do in nature.

Invasive vines (e.g., kudzu, Japanese honeysuckle, Asian wisteria) and aggressive native vines (e.g., grape vines, smilax) will be removed from park trees.

Thorned Plants

Thorned plants are prohibited near entrances and high-traffic areas.

OMIT?

(Alternative)

Thorny plants are not to be planted (or volunteer plants allowed to remain) near the entrance plaza, walkways (e.g., asphalt or grass paths) or other high-traffic areas.

Liability & Safety

Any condition deemed a liability or safety issue by city staff will be addressed immediately and without prior notice.

(Alternative)

Any condition deemed a serious imminent liability or safety issue by city staff will be addressed immediately and without prior notice.

When any serious imminent liability or safety issues are identified and addressed by city staff within the volunteer-maintained native plant gardens and landscaping

- A. A courtesy text will be sent to the designated volunteer contact.
- B. Justification for any actions taken by city staff will be provided soon after.
- C. City staff will fully remediate any actions taken within the native plant gardens later shown not to be a legitimate imminent liability or safety threat.

Maintenance

All maintenance tasks listed above will be performed by city staff on an as-needed basis, without advanced notice.

(Alternative)

City staff have full responsibility for maintaining the park's hardscape (e.g., asphalt parking area, asphalt paths, pavilions, playground, benches, fences, lighting, irrigation lines, faucets) on an as-needed basis, without advance notice.

City staff have full responsibility for maintaining the park's turfgrass lawn and routinely mowed portion of the woods on an as-needed basis, without advance notice.

Given the long-established partnership between the City and park volunteers, responsibility for maintaining the native plant gardens will continue to be entrusted to park volunteers except within 18" of fencing or when there are clear threats to safety and liability.

The native plant gardens and landscaping include the northern gardens, east & west planted borders, meadow, pond, swale, wood edge plantings, existing mulched trees surrounded by lawn, entrance plaza borders, bog garden, & museum garden.

Volunteers will continue to refine the design of the gardens within the current footprint, to select/install/move native plants within the current boundaries, to collect/propagate/sow wildflower seeds, to prune planted trees & shrubs, to weed, water, mulch, and more on an ongoing basis as seasonally appropriate, including the day-to-day activation of the irrigation system.