

## CORRESPONDENCE CONCERNING GROWTH OF IVY ON TREES

### Reply to Rosemary Brown's query

From: Ryan, Jon [<mailto:Jonathan.Ryan2@islington.gov.uk>]

Sent: 15 April 2015 10:53

Dear Rosemary,

Thank you for your enquiry into ivy on trees in Canonbury.

The control of ivy on or over trees is not always a required aspect of crown maintenance. Most trees can co-exist with ivy without too many undue effects. The ivy may, however, be removed or cut back if this is considered necessary in the light of any of the following circumstances: **the plant** is hindering the visual inspection of a tree that could be posing a risk to people or property by virtue of site usage and the suspected presence of weak or decaying structures; **the plant** is growing high into the crown of a tree, so as to increase resistance to the wind and risk of wind throw; **the plant** is significantly weighing down a branch or a leaning tree; **the tree** is otherwise likely to be smothered (e.g. usually by Clematis, Russian vine and only occasionally by ivy), especially if it is old or of poor health and therefore unlikely to outgrow the climbing plant; the amenity of a more formally managed tree is adversely affected the increased crown density has exacerbated local light loss

Any removal of ivy should be undertaken with care so as to avoid undue damage to the tree. Chainsaw use should be avoided where possible to avoid bark damage, the time of year should be considered to avoid sun scorch to thin barked trees when the ivy is removed.

Ivy provides useful habitat and its removal needs to be timed to avoid bird nesting season if possible.

The issue of whether ivy is bad for trees or can kill trees has been debated for a long time. Healthy trees can live with ivy for long periods and I believe that it is only if the tree develops significant defects or is in its final phase of life that the ivy will out-compete the tree for water, nutrients and light. The ivy can then hasten the trees demise.

Ivy has some significant wildlife benefits for invertebrates and nesting birds but it can also hide defects in or on the tree, so from a tree inspection perspective I would often prefer to see any ivy on an urban tree managed to below the crown break and routinely pruned to flatten it off. While this may be my preference for managing trees with ivy, it is not enforceable.

The TPO legislation allows the LPA to have some control over what works may be carried out to protected trees but as a tree officer I have no authority to make people manage or remove ivy, even if the ivy is overcoming a protected tree

The tree owner has a duty of care to maintain their tree in a safe state to ensure that it does not endanger anyone. The council would only be able to intervene if the tree was imminently dangerous to the public and the tree owner was refusing to fulfil their duty of care.

I have attached the most relevant guidance I have on ivy, arboricultural practice note 10. This gives a very good description of ivy and the arguments for and against it growing in trees.

With regards to the obstruction of the street light, specific approval is not required to prune back branches of protected trees to provide 1m clearance of street furniture (including streetlights) and up to 3 metres vertical clearance above a footway or 5 metres above the carriageway.

If a property owner allows vegetation from their property to obstruct the highway ( or a street light) they are obliged to clear it.

The Highways department will instruct the owners to clear the vegetation ( by serving a section 154 notice ). Obstructions can be reported to Highways via the following link;

<mailto:streetworks@islington.gov.uk>

I hope this has answered your queries, if you have any other questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best regards

Jon Ryan

Tree Preservation Officer

Islington Council

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