

JAN 21 2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO TREES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 58, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended
2 by adding five new sections to be appropriately designated and
3 to read as follows:

4 **"S58-A Definitions.** As used in this chapter:

5 "County arborist advisory committee" means a county-level
6 arborist advisory committee established pursuant to section
7 58-2.

8 "Exceptional tree" means a tree, stand, or grove of trees
9 that has been designated by a county arborist advisory committee
10 pursuant to section 58-B.

11 "Significant tree" means a tree designated by a county
12 arborist advisory committee pursuant to section 58-C.

13 "State committee" means the state-level arborist advisory
14 committee established pursuant to section 58-D.

15 **"S58-B Exceptional tree selection criteria.** A county
16 arborist advisory committee shall utilize the following base
17 criteria to designate exceptional trees:



1 (1) Age.

2 (A) Non-specific age. A tree that has reached a
3 notable age without regard to a specific minimum
4 threshold value.

5 (B) Species-specific age. A tree that has reached an
6 age threshold determined by species to account
7 for the varying longevity of different species.

8 (2) Aesthetics.

9 (A) Outstanding example of a species. A visually
10 impressive tree that stands out from others and
11 represents the optimal form of a species.

12 (B) Form, structure, or morphology. A tree that
13 displays an iconic physical appearance, unique
14 form features, or other impressive
15 characteristics that set it apart from other
16 trees.

17 (C) Landmark. A tree that is visually dominant in
18 the landscape and contributes aesthetically to
19 the local area.





1 (4) Botanical and biological value.

2 (A) Unique or exceptional value. A tree that has
3 unique or exceptional botanical, horticultural,
4 aboricultural, or biological value or is a
5 valuable source for future propagation efforts
6 due to its genetic components.

7 (B) Endangered. A tree that is valued based on its
8 endangered status worldwide.

9 (C) Rarity. A tree that is rare due to its
10 infrequent occurrence worldwide.

11 (D) Endemic status. A tree that is of a species
12 endemic to the State; provided that a tree
13 nominated because of endemic status shall also
14 represent at least one other exceptional tree
15 criterion to be considered for exceptional tree
16 designation.

17 (E) Relic specimen. A tree that is a relic of a
18 former ecosystem.

19 (5) Cultural value.

20 (A) Cultural value. A tree that represents a wide
21 range of cultural aspects and values that benefit



1 a community or specific culture, including an
2 association with past and current groups, that
3 provides a sense of place for those in a local
4 community, or that acts as a fundamental
5 component of a community's identity.

6 (B) Social or community value. A tree that is well-
7 known and prominent in the community and provides
8 a connection for those who interact with it.

9 (C) Religious or spiritual value. A tree that is
10 associated with religious or spiritual practices.

11 (D) Legends and oral histories. A tree that is
12 associated with a legend or oral history,
13 including through depictions in stories, songs,
14 or dances.

15 (6) Historical value.

16 (A) Historical value. A tree that is associated with
17 a historical place, event, or date that made a
18 lasting and important contribution to an area.

19 (B) Historic person or memorial planting. A tree
20 that was planted, for, by, or in association with



1 a historically important person, event, group, or
2 institution.

3 (C) Represented in historical documents. A tree that
4 is referenced or visually depicted in historical
5 documents.

6 (D) Historical witness. A tree that witnessed, was a
7 part of, or was located at the site of an
8 important historical or cultural event.

9 (7) Size.

10 (A) Species-specific size. A tree that has reached a
11 notable size over a specific threshold in
12 comparison to other trees of its species.

13 (B) Champion size. A tree that represents the
14 largest physical metrics for a species in a
15 county arborist advisory committee's geographic
16 region based on measurements of height,
17 circumference, or canopy spread. A single tree
18 may be the champion of multiple categories.

19 (C) Non-specific size. A tree that has reached a
20 notable size without regard to a specific minimum
21 threshold value.



1 Exceptional trees may be designated generally by biotaxy or
2 individually by location or class.

3 **§58-C Significant tree designation; established.** (a)
4 There is established a statewide recognition program for
5 significant trees as a tier two classification under the
6 exceptional trees program, for education and outreach purposes
7 only. Significant tree designations shall be made to promote
8 awareness, education, and community engagement relating to the
9 value of the State's tree canopy. Significant trees may later
10 become designated as exceptional trees.

11 (b) Significant trees shall be evaluated using the
12 selection criteria pursuant to section 58-B. Significant trees
13 shall exhibit one or more of the selection criteria, but to a
14 lesser extent than the threshold required to be designated as an
15 exceptional tree.

16 (c) The designation of a significant tree shall be made by
17 a county arborist advisory committee. Applications for
18 recognition may be submitted by individuals, organizations, or
19 government agencies. Approval or denial of a significant tree
20 designation shall be determined by a majority vote of a county
21 arborist advisory committee.



1 (d) Designation as a significant tree shall neither impose
2 additional regulatory obligations nor provide tax benefits to
3 property owners.

4 **S58-D State arborist advisory committee; established.**

5 There is established the state arborist advisory committee
6 within the department of land and natural resources for
7 administrative purposes, which shall consist of not less than
8 nine and not more than thirteen members. Members of the state
9 arborist advisory committee shall be appointed by the governor
10 and shall include:

11 (1) A representative from each county arborist advisory
12 committee; and

13 (2) Not less than four and not more than eight individuals
14 with expertise in arboriculture, urban forestry,
15 landscape architecture, cultural or historical
16 knowledge, and community engagement.

17 **S58-E State arborist advisory committee; powers and**

18 **duties.** For the purposes of this chapter, the state arborist
19 advisory committee shall have the following powers and duties:

20 (1) To oversee the State's exceptional tree program,
21 including the development, coordination, and



1 implementation of a strategic state exceptional and
2 significant trees master plan. The state arborist
3 advisory committee shall provide the master plan to
4 each county arborist advisory committee;

5 (2) To act as a resource to county arborist advisory
6 committees to ensure consistent and standardized
7 implementation of exceptional and significant tree
8 legislation;

9 (3) To produce a statewide exceptional and significant
10 tree registry that shall be updated annually to
11 reflect the status of exceptional and significant
12 trees throughout the State;

13 (4) To advise the governor, legislature, and state
14 departments and agencies on exceptional and
15 significant trees, urban forestry, and other tree-
16 related issues; and

17 (5) To work in conjunction with community groups to
18 develop and implement educational campaigns to
19 increase public awareness of the exceptional tree
20 program. Campaigns may utilize websites, brochures,



1 social media platforms, and interactive tools to
2 complement community workshops and presentations."

3 SECTION 2. Chapter 58, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended
4 to read as follows:

5 "~~§58-1~~ **Purpose.** It is the policy of the State to
6 safeguard exceptional trees from destruction due to improper
7 land development, and the legislature finds that enactment of
8 protective regulations by the State and counties to accomplish
9 this is a valid and important public purpose. The legislature
10 further finds that the establishment of state- and county-level
11 arborist advisory committees, additional selection criteria, and
12 significant tree designations are necessary to ensure cohesion
13 in safeguarding the State's environmental, cultural, historical,
14 economic, and aesthetic values.

15 **§58-2 County arborist advisory committees; establishment.**

16 Each county of the State shall establish a county arborist
17 advisory committee~~[, whose]~~ consisting of at least six members.
18 The members of each county arborist advisory committee shall be
19 appointed by the mayor and shall include:

20 (1) The county planning director, or the director's
21 designee;



1 (2) [One] At least one member who shall be a person
2 actively employed in the practice of landscape
3 architecture, a certified arborist, a horticulturist
4 with specialization in trees, or a person who has
5 received a master's degree in botany; and
6 (3) Not less than three other members selected on the
7 basis of active participation in programs of community
8 beautification, or research or organization in the
9 ecological sciences, including but not limited to
10 botany, ethnobotany, horticulture, geography, tropical
11 plant and soil science, or Hawaiiana.

12 **S58-3 County arborist advisory committees; powers and**
13 **duties.** For the purposes of this chapter, the county arborist
14 advisory committees shall have the following powers and duties
15 in addition to those delegated by the respective county
16 councils:

17 (1) To research, prepare, and recommend to the county
18 council exceptional trees to be protected by county
19 ordinance or regulation[.];
20 (2) To advise property owners relative to the preservation
21 and enhancement of exceptional trees[.];



[For the purposes of this section, "exceptional trees" means a tree or stand or grove of trees with historic or cultural value, or which by reason of its age, rarity, location, size, esthetic quality, or endemic status has been designated by the county committee as worthy of preservation. The term "exceptional trees" does not apply to trees planted for commercial forestry operations in each county within the State. Exceptional trees may be designated generally by biotaxy or individually by location or class.]

17 [+]§58-4[+] **County protective regulations.** Each county
18 shall enact appropriate protective regulations [which designate]
19 that:



- 1 (2) Provide for special county review prior to destruction
- 2 of exceptional trees, whether by removal or the
- 3 existence of conditions which lead to the destruction
- 4 of such trees; [provide]
- 5 (3) Provide for site plan review and amendment to protect
- 6 exceptional trees; and [provide]
- 7 (4) Provide for injunctive relief against the removal or
- 8 destruction of exceptional trees.

9 **§58-5 State assistance.** The department of land and
10 natural resources and the [University] university of Hawaii
11 shall cooperate with and to the fullest extent possible assist
12 the State and counties and their respective arborist advisory
13 committees in carrying out the purposes of this chapter."

14 SECTION 3. In codifying the new sections added by section
15 1 of this Act, the revisor of statutes shall substitute
16 appropriate section numbers for the letters used in designating
17 the new sections in this Act.

18 SECTION 4. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
19 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

20



1 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

2

INTRODUCED BY:

Mike Gabbard



S.B. NO. 2372

Report Title:

DLNR; UH; Exceptional Trees Program; Significant Trees; State Arborist Advisory Committee; County Arborist Advisory Committees

Description:

Establishes base selection criteria for exceptional trees. Establishes the significant tree designation, selection criteria, and related processes. Establishes the State Arborist Advisory Committee within the Department of Land and Natural Resources for administrative purposes. Requires County Arborist Advisory Committees to have at least six members, adopt new exceptional tree selection criteria, and designate significant trees. Directs the Department of Land and Natural Resources and the University of Hawaii to cooperate with State and County Arborist Advisory Committees to carry out the Exceptional Trees Program.

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