

**ORIGINAL**

**ORDINANCE NO.: 2024-088**

*Amending the 1998 Code of Ordinances of the City of Columbia, South Carolina, Chapter 8, Environmental Health and Sanitation, Article VII, Weeds and Debris, Sec. 8-301, et seq.*

BE IT ORDAINED by the Mayor and Council this 3<sup>rd</sup> day of December, 2024, that the 1998 Code of Ordinances of the City of Columbia, South Carolina, Chapter 8, Environmental Health and Sanitation, Article VII, Weeds and Debris, Sec. 8-301, *et seq.*, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 8-301. - Removal required.

It shall be unlawful for the owner and/or occupant of property to fail to cut grass, weeds and other overgrowth vegetation on property when the grass, weeds and other overgrowth vegetation is of a greater height than one foot on the average, or to permit the property to serve as a breeding place for mosquitoes, as a collecting place for trash and litter, or as a fire hazard, any one of which situations is declared to be a nuisance. However, in accordance with Sec. 8-306 (below), if the area in question is a planned and managed naturalistic landscape, designed to support pollinators, birds and other wildlife, these restrictions do not apply. It shall be the duty of the owner and occupant to cut and remove all grass, weeds and other overgrowth vegetation as often as necessary so as to comply with this section, unless the vegetation has been installed and managed to support habitat. Vacant lots shall be cut at least three times per year, as required during the growing season (April through September). Heavily wooded lots where equipment cannot maneuver on the lot because of density of the area shall be trimmed within 20 feet of street right-of-way and adjacent improved property and kept free of litter.

Sec. 8-302. - Notice to remove.

Whenever the public services department of the city, or its duly authorized agent or representative, shall find that weeds or other rank vegetation has been allowed to stand upon, or any such debris has been allowed to accumulate and remain upon, any lot or parcel of land in the city, unless said vegetation is part of a planned and managed naturalistic landscape, the public services department may serve notice upon the owner, lessee or occupant of the premises, or upon the agent or representative of the owner of such land having control thereof, to comply with the provisions of this article. It shall be sufficient notification to deliver the notice to the person to whom it is addressed, or to deposit a copy of such notice in the United States mail properly stamped and directed to the person to whom the notice is addressed, or to post a copy of the notice upon such premises.

(Code 1979, § 9-3022)

Sec. 8-303. - Failure to comply with notice.

If the person to whom the notice is directed under the provisions of section 8-302 fails or neglects to cause such weeds or other rank vegetation to be cut and removed or such debris to be removed from any such premises within thirty days after such notice has been served, or deposited in the United States mail, or posted upon the premises, such person shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, punishable, upon conviction, in accordance with section 1-5.

(Code 1979, § 9-3023)

Sec. 8-304. - Removal by city on failure to comply with notice.

Weeds, rank vegetation or debris existing on any property not removed pursuant to section 8-303 may be removed by a duly authorized agent of the city, and the cost of doing so shall become a lien upon the property affected and shall be collected in the same manner as municipal taxes are collected. This remedy shall be cumulative to other remedies, penalties or fines.

(Code 1979, § 9-3024)

Sec. 8-305. - Removal by city at request of owner or occupant.

Upon the written request by the owner or the person in control of any lot or parcel of land covered by this article, and the payment to the city for the services, the public services department may enter upon any such lands and cut and remove the weeds or other rank vegetation or remove such debris therefrom, the charge and cost of such service to be paid into the city treasury.

(Code 1979, § 9-3025)

Sec. 8-306. – Certification of naturalistic landscape or garden.

In recognition of the environmental benefits of planned, managed, naturalistic landscapes and gardens, the city recognizes the need for a deviation from strict code enforcement regarding these properties.

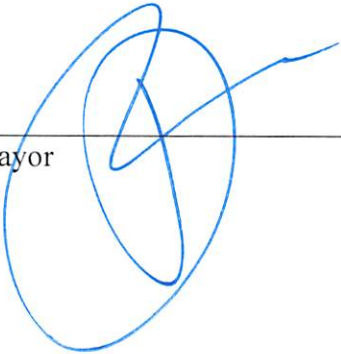
- a) To assist with this, the city encourages any such garden to be certified as such by a reputable organization. Such organizations include, but are not limited to, South Carolina Wildlife Federation, Gills Creek Watershed Association, and Clemson’s Carolina Yard. Signage verifying compliance with these organizations’ standards is encouraged, but not required.
- b) Registration with City of Columbia Code Enforcement is required to maintain a naturalistic garden within the City. Owners or persons in control of such gardens shall contact Code Enforcement to provide vital information, such as address and contact information. Property owners must also provide evidence of certification with an organization such as those listed in subsection a or submit to a site visit by Code Enforcement. In such a visit, code enforcement officers shall look for “cues to care,” such as trimmed borders, signage, birdbaths, paths, and the like when attempting to determine if a potentially offensive property is actually a planned and managed garden.
- c) Owners or persons in control of naturalistic gardens remain subject to all other City ordinances regarding environmental health and sanitation as listed in the rest of

Chapter 8. Code enforcement retains the authority to issue notice and/or remove offending vegetation pursuant to both 802 and 803 above, as well as other subsections within this Chapter.

Secs. 8-307-8-330. - Reserved.

Requested by:

Mayor Daniel Rickenmann

  
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Mayor

Approved by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City Manager

Approved as to form:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City Attorney

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk

Introduced: 11/19/2024  
Final Reading: 12/03/2024