Vegetation Management Plan
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Foreword

The information provided is intended to help our members and other stakeholders better understand necessary maintenance procedures in MEA’s power line easements. We hope this will answer some of the most commonly asked questions regarding trimming and re-clearing of vegetation and removal of trees in or near MEA’s overhead and underground electrical system.

The primary goal of any electric utility is to provide safe, economical and reliable service for its members. If we do our job well, members don’t even think about their power—it is simply there on demand, whenever they need it, to power their computers, appliances, and other needs.

Achieving this goal, however, involves a diverse set of programs managed by the utility. One of the most important—and most visible—of these is the Vegetation Management Program. Vegetation management is unique among reliability programs because of its direct impact on members.

Although most members understand and accept vegetation management as a necessary task, there will always be cases where MEA’s responsibility to prune trees or remove vegetation creates conflict with members who object. This is a universal issue for electric utilities, and one MEA has experienced from its early days.

One way we are working to address this issue is to be sensitive to member’s concerns and, therefore, to invest more significant effort and resources in the management of the program. As a result, MEA’s program will become a much more coordinated, consistent, and professional program driven by national standards. Our commitment to this effort will include a more focused communication effort, a continuous improvement plan based on our past successes, past failures, future needs, and increased one-on-one interactions with our members.

Even the very best program, however, will face resistance when its standards conflict with the wishes of an individual member. It is important to understand that regardless of the changes we make in our program, there will always be the potential for conflict when any given member objects to our work. No Vegetation Management Program can be designed that completely eliminates impacts on each individual member.

In the end, however, MEA has an obligation to all our members to maintain safe and reliable electric service. Vegetation management is an important component of that work, and it must continue. MEA is continually working to improve our performance as an electric utility in the areas of reliability, fiscal responsibility, safety, member education and satisfaction. Our hope is that the changes we have made and will make in the future will help our members better understand the clearing needs of MEA.
Safety

For decades, trees and power lines have shared the same space. Unfortunately, trees that grow near power lines can be dangerous and cause power outages. Right of way clearing is an important part of MEA’s goal of delivering safe, reliable, cost-effective electric service. Trees and branches that grow into the power lines can cause outages and system disturbances especially when we have wet snow, ice or severe wind conditions. Tree and brush clearing can help reduce the number and length of outages. By keeping the trees and brush out of the right of way, emergency repairs can be completed safer and in less time. In order to maintain an adequate level of reliability and to ensure a high-standard of quality service to our members, MEA monitors and manages vegetation growth that may create a potential problem.

Existing overhead lines and equipment are evaluated to ensure appropriate clearances are maintained. The growth cycle of trees and brush is also looked at as some faster-growing trees may require more clearance than others. MEA crews demonstrate due diligence in removing and trimming only what is necessary. In some cases a tree may not look as though it will not create a line conflict, but in the winter when loaded with snow or ice it can contact the overhead lines. Tree branches can cause blinking lights, momentary outages, or even brush fires during heavy winds when they come in contact with power lines.

Remember to always look up and look out for power lines when working outdoors. Coming into contact with energized equipment or power lines will result in serious injury or death. Stay away from power lines when you are using aluminum ladders, tree trimming equipment or other tools that extend above your head. When cutting trees or trimming trees on your property always be aware and locate any electric lines and utility equipment that may come in contact with the tree or branches being cut. If a tree falls on a power line, please keep everyone away from the tree until MEA can respond.

Trees, tree branches, vines and brush are also good conductors of electricity. Electrical shock or electrocution can occur through indirect contact when trees or tree branches have grown into or close to energized power lines or equipment. It is extremely important to keep children from climbing trees that have power lines running through them due to the risk or shock or electrocution.

Objectives

No plan can succeed without clear, concise goals or objectives. The following objectives have been identified as crucial to the success of the MEA Vegetation Management Plan.

- To ensure safe, reliable, and economical electric service.
- To consider associated costs and the impact on MEA members.
- To appropriately maintain trees within power line right-of-ways.
• To support good arboricultural practices to ensure healthy trees.
• To ensure effective communication with members regarding vegetation management and dispute resolution.
• To strengthen community, member, and contractor education.
• To balance the rights and responsibilities of both property owners and MEA, ensuring all members are treated equitably.
• To have an MEA representative respond quickly to any questions or complaints from our members relating to vegetation management.

The Challenges

MEA faces a daunting task in the effort to properly manage vegetation over the entire distribution and transmission system. MEA must maintain the following miles of line:

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<th>Transmission Lines</th>
<th>Overhead Distribution</th>
<th>Underground Distribution</th>
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<tr>
<td>MEA Owned</td>
<td>125 miles</td>
<td>2260 miles</td>
<td>1800 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEA &amp; EOC Owned</td>
<td>134 miles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>259 miles</strong></td>
<td><strong>2260 miles</strong></td>
<td><strong>1800 miles</strong></td>
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It is important to remember that MEA’s system continues to grow each year as new lines are built. MEA must clear over 300 miles of overhead line annually to maintain an effective clearing cycle. It takes us about eight years to complete a clearing cycle in the areas that we serve. And once that’s done, we start all over again from the beginning.

Some of the major challenges encountered in MEA’s vegetation management efforts are listed below.
1. **Weather**--The weather in Alaska presents challenges not seen in many other areas of the United States. Wind conditions in the Mat-Su Valley cause extensive damage to the electrical system in a very short period of time. Wind coupled with wet ground conditions, causes many trees to be blown over each year. Snow and ice buildup on trees cause many trees outside of MEA’s easement to lean into power lines causing many more outages.

2. **Short construction season**--We go from snow and frozen ground conditions to mud during break-up each year and then back to mud and then to snow and frozen ground conditions. This creates a short time period when ground conditions are optimal for MEA to perform clearing activities.

3. **Access issues created by members**—Placement of fences, planted vegetation and other obstructions in the right of way or around pad mounted equipment create access issues for our clearing and line crews.

4. **Rapid vegetation growth**—The period of time for vegetation growth in Alaska is short, but conditions are perfect for rapid growth. Fertile soil in the Mat-Su Valley coupled with abundant daylight during the summer creates perfect growing conditions.

### Why Does MEA Clear?

We clear for several basic reasons:
- Safety for MEA employees and the public. Each year in the United States, members of the public are injured cutting trees onto power lines or attempting to remove trees from power lines. In addition, children are sometimes injured climbing trees which have grown into overhead power lines.
- A clear right of way enables our line crews to quickly access power lines, identify outage causes, and make repairs. Maintaining cleared rights of way helps shorten the length of outages considerably.
• To prevent danger trees from falling into the lines. Trees falling into power lines are one of the leading causes of power outages. As clearing progresses through our electrical system, danger trees are identified and removed.

• To prevent trees from growing into power lines which in turn energizes the tree creating a hazard to people, pets and equipment. Also, electricity going into the ground costs us all money, similar to leaving your water running while no one is using it.

• To remove trees growing near our underground facilities. Yes, strange as it may seem, MEA does perform clearing in areas where underground power lines are present. We must maintain clear working space for our line crews to safely perform their work in these areas also.

• To comply with legal requirements. MEA, as an electric cooperative, complies with many of the regulations set forth by the Rural Utilities Service. One of these requirements is to build and maintain lines according to the National Electrical Safety Code (NESC). The NESC is also adopted by the State of Alaska which requires all electric utilities in the state to follow the safety guidelines it contains. Section 218 of the NESC addresses the responsibility of utilities to manage vegetation.

• To comply with MEA’s Tariff, which is approved by the Regulatory Commission of Alaska, and to comply with MEA policies.

What does MEA Clear?

MEA starts with a clear path when new electric lines are installed. Trees are removed; underbrush is cleared and nearby trees are trimmed so there is adequate clearance for the line. Just as it is MEA’s responsibility to clear the path at the time a new line is built, it is also our responsibility to keep the path clear by trimming and removing trees near high voltage lines regularly after the line is built.

At the time a new line is built, written permission from the current property owner is obtained to place electrical facilities on the property. Easement rights are granted for the line to be placed in
its current location and for MEA to access the property in the future for maintenance and repair. With the passing of time and change in property owners, this important fact is sometimes not passed on to the new owners.

The width of the easement is also determined based upon the type of line or equipment MEA will place on the property. Easement widths vary from 15 feet in width for underground facilities to 100 feet in width for high voltage transmission lines. Typical easement widths for overhead distribution lines are 20 feet or 30 feet dependent upon whether the line is single phase (one energized conductor and one grounded conductor) or 3 phase (three energized conductors and one grounded conductor).

At the time the line is built, MEA clears all vegetation growing within the easement and trims all limbs encroaching into the easement to allow a minimum of 10 feet of clearance between energized conductors and any vegetation. This clearance allows MEA to come back in 7 to 10 years to re-clear vegetation. When MEA re-clears the easement, it is cleared back to the original width which was established at the time the power lines were installed.

Re-clearing to the full width of the original easement has not been performed consistently throughout the history of MEA. This failure to clear responsibly creates many challenges for MEA when re-clearing is performed today. Additional cost is required to remove larger trees which have grown in the easement and more time is required to perform re-clearing activities. But of more concern to MEA is the level of dissatisfaction our members feel when re-clearing is performed. It is difficult for our members to understand why MEA must remove vegetation which has been in place for many years. MEA removes this vegetation to decrease the number of outages caused by trees and to further extend the re-clearing cycle. Removing these problem trees today is more cost effective than choosing to kick the can down the road and remove them at a later date at even higher costs. MEA is deeply concerned about the cost of re-clearing as we endeavor to be good stewards of the resources provided by our member owners. It is important to remember, as an electric cooperative, MEA is owned by you, our members.

**How Does MEA Clear?**
Vegetation Management at MEA is accomplished using a combination of MEA employees and contractors. MEA maintains an in house Clearing Department which works year round to control vegetation. During the summer construction season, the in house crews are normally supplemented with 1 to 3 temporary employees who work for 6 months.

MEA also utilizes contract crews during the summer. During most years, a total of 2 to 3 vegetation management contract crews are working on MEA’s system. This is done via a competitive bidding system whereby contracts are awarded to the most responsible bidder providing the lowest bid.

**Clearing Methods**

Listed below are the methods utilized in MEA’s vegetation management program.

1. **Tree Pruning Standards and Practices** - All pruning practices follow modern guidelines as published by the International Association of Arboriculture (ISA) and are consistent with ANSI 300 standards. Correct tree trimming should promote tree growth away from electrical conductors, provide longer periods of clearance, and reduce future work. Tree pruning is accomplished by skilled arborists climbing trees or using an aerial lift to access limbs which must be removed or by the use of an aerial trimmer such as the Kershaw Sky Trim.

   Utility tree pruning is normally accomplished via one of three ways:
   
   a. **V-pruning**: In which the center branches are removed to enable power lines to pass through them.
b. **Side-pruning:** In which tree growth is steered to one side or another of the power lines by removing branches on just one side.

c. **Crown reduction:** When neither of the first two methods will work for a particular tree, pruning may occur from the top, leaving clearance for power lines to pass overhead.

2. **Tree Removal** - Tree removal is an important element of MEA’s Vegetation Management Program. Tree removal eliminates hazardous conditions, improves access to facilities and reduces future work. Tree removals will be pursued wherever feasible. When performing our vegetation management duties, we do our best to preserve the trees you have. But in some cases, problem trees or improperly-planted trees pose an unacceptable risk to safety and reliability to leave them standing. In those cases, MEA will inform you that the tree needs to be removed and will remove it at no cost to you. In some cases, a replacement tree may be provided. If so, we will provide you with a list of replacement trees suitable for you to plant near overhead power lines. Trees included in our replacement tree program are chosen not only for their shorter height, but also for their ornamental beauty.

**Tree Removal Candidates**
a. Trees that are located at homes, schools, parks, and businesses, or other areas, which children may climb easily and contact primary conductors.
b. Climbable trees or trees with tree houses close to primary conductors.
c. Fast growing trees that may interfere with primary conductors before the next maintenance trimming.
d. Volunteer trees which will eventually interfere with primary conductors.
e. Immature trees that are not presently interfering with primary conductors, but could at their mature height.
f. Dead, dying, diseased, deformed and unstable trees which have a high probability of falling and contacting primary or secondary conductors which may include trees located outside of MEA’s easement.
g. Trees that require extensive trimming.
h. Trees located within MEA’s easement.
i. Trees blocking access to overhead and underground easements.

**Tree Removal Conditions**

a. Tree removals are normally limited to fifteen feet either side of distribution conductors and within transmission rights of way, excluding danger trees.
b. Danger trees (outside of the right of way) will only be removed if there is a threat of the tree or limbs falling and contacting the primary conductor.
c. Stumps shall be cut as close to the ground as practical in all areas.

**Mechanical Methods**

Mechanical equipment is currently the primary method by which MEA clears easements. A true Integrated Vegetation Management Plan would include the use of herbicides and growth regulators to control vegetation growth. Due to environmental concerns, chemicals are not used by MEA in our easements.

a. **Hand Cutting** – Hand cutting is the mechanical cutting of vegetation using chainsaws, brush saws, loppers or hand pruners. Hand cutting may be conducted at any time of the year. Target species are cut as close to the ground as practical. Slash from the cutting is cut and hand stacked or “windrowed” to lie as close to the ground as possible. Hand-cutting is used to protect environmentally sensitive or wet areas, as well as around structures, gates or access roads and on sites where terrain, site sensitivity or site size makes mowing impractical.
b. **Mowing** - Mowing is the mechanical cutting of vegetation using large tree/brush mowers mounted in rubber tired tractors or tracked vehicles. Mowing may be used at any time of the year except when deep snow prevents safe operation. Selection of specific equipment is based on terrain, vegetation size, location and equipment availability. Mowing is restricted by steep slopes, rocky terrain, obstructions, wet sites with deep soft soils and debris on the right-of-way.

c. **Slash** – This is the woody debris generated in cutting operations. Slash will be disposed of by dicing and cutting low to the ground. The preferred method of disposal is to dice and cut low to the ground and leave to on the right-of-way to decay naturally. While the slash may not be visually appealing when first cut, it is important to remember this slash will quickly disappear once vegetation starts to grow in the easement again. Slash will not be left in waterways, trails or roads, or in such a manner that would permit it to wash into these areas. It is important to note that MEA easements are not to be considered recreation areas. Chipping is used when dicing and cutting low to the ground are prohibited or impractical. Chips will be removed in highly sensitive sites. When left on site, wood chips will be scattered uniformly over the site.

**Member Requests for Tree Removal**

MEA receives several hundred requests from members each year to remove trees which the member feels are a danger to MEA power lines. MEA reserves the right to refuse to cut or remove any trees which pose no danger to MEA’s facilities or can be safely cut or removed by a private tree company with no damage to MEA power lines. It is not uncommon for several weeks to pass from the time the report is received until an MEA crew can access the tree. This program is administered according to MEA Management Policy 703-52 Danger/Hazard Tree Program included below.
Guidelines for Planting and Landscaping Around Pad Mounted Equipment

MEA appreciates how much you value the appearance of your home and commercial landscaping. Good appearance is one of the primary reasons for underground utilities. However, those underground electric lines must surface somewhere if they are to serve electrical equipment. In areas that are served by underground facilities, pad mounted transformers and switchgear, or “those green boxes,” are placed at selected intervals along main electric lines near streets and roadways.
Remember, MEA employees may need access to the equipment at any time for troubleshooting, emergency repairs or routine maintenance. Electric equipment must be visually and physically accessible to MEA crews at all times. For underground power lines, trees should be planted far enough away from the pad mounted equipment that when they reach maturity, overhanging branches won’t obstruct a crane from removing a defective transformer or setting a new one. Roots from trees planted too close also create problems when they grow under pad mounted equipment or when they grow into underground conductors. Trees, shrubs and other landscape plantings should not be placed on the utility easement above underground electric cables. It is also important not to change the grade around equipment to avoid problems with access and depth requirements for buried cables.

It is critical that the access or door(s) to pad mounted transformers and switchgear be kept clear for 10 feet in front. The non-door sides must have a 5 foot clearance free of obstacles. If landscaping is placed too close to the transformer, service restoration efforts are delayed due to the time required for obstacles to be removed by MEA employees. The picture below illustrates the distance required for MEA employees to safely access pad mounted equipment. All landscaping near underground equipment should be pre-approved by MEA before planting.

The pictures below are examples of proper landscaping techniques around pad mounted equipment.
The pictures below are examples of improper landscaping techniques around pad mounted equipment.

The following tips when landscaping around underground facilities will help prevent future conflict when MEA needs to access electrical equipment located on your property.

- Place vegetation a minimum of 5 feet away from the equipment’s sides and a minimum of 10 feet away from the front of the access door.
- Plant vegetation far enough away so it reaches no closer than the minimum distances above when the vegetation reaches maturity.
- Grass, gravel or small rocks are recommended within the 5 or 10 foot vegetation free zone.
- Avoid delicate flowerbed plantings that may be harmed.
- Large rocks should be placed at least 10 feet away from all sides of the equipment.
- Do not place vegetation or materials, such as rocks, timbers or fences, within 10 feet of the access door.
• Do not build a structure over or around electrical equipment, and do not build something that encloses it.
• Do not use vines or plants with spiny leaves near electrical equipment.
• CAUTION: always obtain locates before any digging or planting near underground equipment.

Communicating With Our Members

As a non-profit, member-owned electric service provider, MEA is committed to serving our members effectively and efficiently by utilizing sound business practices and appropriate technology. Effective communication is crucial to the success of any endeavor, especially one that impacts as many members as our Vegetation Management Plan. Each year, between 4000 and 7000 MEA members live in an area MEA has targeted for clearing. Communicating with this number of members can be challenging since one method of communication is not guaranteed to reach everyone.

MEA’s communications strategy is to use the following methods;

• MEA website, at mea.coop, will have a copy of our Vegetation Management Plan as well as maps of the areas where clearing will occur. The Clearing Department phone number and e-mail address can also be found here.
• Facebook and Twitter will also be utilized to provide clearing information.
• The Powerlines newsletter will also contain information concerning the areas which are scheduled to be cleared.
• Community meetings or presentations may be held.
• Advertisements on the radio as well as local newspapers will be utilized to provide clearing information.
• On a more personal level, post cards will be mailed to members living in areas where clearing will occur. The post cards are mailed approximately 3 weeks prior to the time clearing is scheduled to begin.
• Automated phone calls are also used to notify members of clearing which will occur in their area. These calls are typically made 10 days prior to the start of clearing activities. This is another reason it is vitally important for each member to be sure MEA has a valid phone number.
• Door hangers are installed at each residence impacted by clearing activities. These are also installed approximately at least 4 days prior to the start of clearing activities.
• The MEA Clearing Department can be reached at 907-761-9306 or via e-mail at clearingdepartment@mea.coop anytime there is an issue.
MEA supports the philosophy of “The Right Tree in the Right Place” as a means of having a more attractive community to live in and a more dependable electrical system to serve its members. There are several relatively simple steps our members can take to assist MEA in properly maintaining power line easements.

- Keep the easement clear of debris and obstacles which create an obstruction.
- Plant trees out of the easement where they will not cause a problem with power lines in the future.
- Place all plants and landscaping a sufficient distance from underground electrical equipment to allow access by MEA personnel.
- Stay clear of areas where MEA clearing activities are occurring.
- Please treat our crews with respect. Our crews are there to perform a job and are required to treat everyone they come in contact with courteously and respectfully. If there is a concern, our crews are instructed to contact an appropriate member of MEA management to assist in resolving the concern. Contact our Clearing Department at 907-761-9306 or via e-mail at clearingdepartment@mea.coop if you have a concern.
- Report any hazard trees you see to our Clearing Department so we can determine if the tree needs to be removed.

We look forward to working together with all of our members to continue to provide safe, economical and reliable electric service.
The Tree Line USA® program exists to recognize best practices in public and private utility arboriculture, demonstrating how trees and utilities can co-exist for the benefit of communities and citizens. The Arbor Day Foundation collaborates with the National Association of State Foresters on this initiative. These state foresters bring expertise in balancing the demands of expanding utility needs in our communities alongside the benefits of providing adequate care for our urban forests.

MEA worked diligently in 1997 and 1998 to qualify for the Tree Line USA award and has continued the practices that made MEA the first Tree Line USA Utility in Alaska in 1998. The core standards of the Tree Line USA program are listed below.

Five Core Standards

1. Quality Tree Care — Industry standards for pruning, planting, removing and working near trees are consistently followed.
   a. Work practices are formally adopted for line clearance tree pruning that are consistent with current ANSI A300 Part 1 and as explained in ISA Utility Pruning Best Management Practices.
   b. Work practices are formally adopted for management of right-of-way vegetation that are consistent with current ANSI A300 Part 7 and as explained in ISA Integrated Vegetation Management Best Management Practices.
   c. The utility’s vegetation management standards and work practices comply with all Federal, state, and local tree care statutes, regulations and ordinances.
   d. The utility has a quality control program and quality assurance process in place to confirm that the vegetation management work is completed in a manner consistent with the provisions for Quality Tree Care, items 1a and 1b above.
   e. The utility vegetation management program includes collaboration with other urban forest advocates and managers and strives to enhance the positive impact of its vegetation management program on both the natural and urban forests.

2. Annual Worker Training — Utility employees and contract workers are trained at least annually in best practices.
   a. Employees, contractor workers and supervisors who perform pruning and right of way vegetation maintenance work for the utility complete annual formal training. The focus of the training is comprehension of and compliance with Utility Pruning and Integrated Vegetation Management practices per current ANSI Z133.1 Standards.

3. Tree Planting and Public Education — Tree planting and public education programs are available to the public and paying customers which demonstrate proper tree planting, placement, and pruning while expanding the tree canopy in the community.
   a. The utility allocates an annual expenditure of at least 10 cents per customer for use in community tree planting programs throughout the service area. Community Tree Planting expenditures can be combined with Public Education and Energy Conservation Program expenditures. Qualifying expenses can include trees planted by the utility company or funding provided to municipal or other tree planting organizations. Examples of community tree planting may include:
      i. A utility tree planting program in utility right-of-way or on public property.
Establishment of a “Right Tree-Right Place” demonstration garden or park. MEA has maintained a “Right Tree-Right Place” demonstration plot, the Rehor Arboretum since 1997. The Rehor Arboretum now sets the example of quality tree care, by educating our members about planting near power lines as well as promoting the beauty and necessity of trees within our communities. It continues to serve as MEA’s focal point of our community tree-planting program. The arboretum helps to promote and enhance the public’s interest and knowledge about our environment. The arboretum features utility ‘friendly’ trees and shrubs; a visual model showing members where to plant ornamentals in proximity to power lines.

4. Tree-Based Energy Conservation Program — A formal tree-based energy conservation program is in place, putting special consideration on the value of trees in conserving energy.
   a. MEA provides energy-efficient landscape information to members and the public through several ways: information tables at the Annual Meeting, Chamber of Commerce presentations, and school presentations. Also tree information packets are mailed upon request to members, and brochures are given during on-site visits by the clearing supervisor, inspectors, tree crews, and/or the Utility Arborist. Tree information articles are printed in the customer newsletter “Power Lines” that is mailed to members with the monthly bill. MEA partners with local retailers when customers are directed to local nurseries upon receiving vouchers in the trade a tree program. Replacement trees purchased in the Trade a Tree program are planted on private property out of the power line easement.
   b. MEA provides energy-efficient landscape information to members and the public through the utility’s Web site www.mea.coop. Articles such as “Add Beauty, Value & Efficiency with Trees” encourage tree planting and explain how trees planted in the right places can save the average household from $100 to $250 in energy costs annually. It also promotes the beauty and value trees add to a landscape and how trees help clean the air.

5. Arbor Day Celebration — Sponsorship of or participation in annual Arbor Day events at the community level are documented, including collaboration with community groups whenever possible.
   a. On May 20, 2013 an Arbor Day Tree Planting Ceremony was held at the Cottonwood Creek Elementary School in Wasilla, Alaska. Matanuska Electric Association was represented by Certified Arborist Utility Specialist, Bill Jardel and MEA clearing crew member Ben Hopper. After an Arbor Day proclamation was read to the audience by Matanuska Susitna Borough Mayor Larry DeVilbiss, Bill Jardel conducted a demonstration tree planting for the students who then planted 40 White Spruce trees on the school grounds. MEA had the same tree information table set up at their annual meeting.

The Right Tree in the Right Place
Under the guidance of MEA Clearing Foreman Bill Jardel, MEA developed an arboretum featuring utility-friendly trees. Bill Jardel became the first Alaskan to be certified as an arborist in October 1994. He is now the administrator of the International Society of Arboriculture exam in Alaska. The first state exam took place in Anchorage in July 1996. There are currently 15 certified arborists in Alaska.

An arboretum is a place where trees and shrubs are grown for exhibition or study. MEA’s goal is to help promote and enhance the public’s interest and knowledge about our environment, through member use of the arboretum.

A demonstration tree planting plot (arboretum) has been planted across the street from the Palmer MEA headquarters. Plot installation began during Arbor Week in May 1997. The purpose of the plot is to show MEA members where to plant ornamentals in proximity to high voltage primary power lines.

The plot is subdivided into three areas. Each area defines what should be planted according to the final plant height at maturity. When fully grown, there should be no conflict with the electric wires and structures, and the design should minimize future trimming, repetitive maintenance costs and power outage costs.

1. Area 1 starts at the outer edge of the easement and extends 15 feet. Maximum shrub or tree height in Area 1 is 10 feet. Note that some lilac types can exceed 10 feet in height, as they seem to flourish in Alaska, particularly Common French Lilacs.
2. Area 2 begins 15 feet from the outer edge of the easement and extends to 45 feet from the outer edge of the easement. The maximum tree height is 40 feet.
3. Area 3 begins at 45 feet from the outer edge of the easement to 75 feet from the outer edge of easement. There, trees taller than 40 feet can be planted and will not interfere with overhead lines when the tree reaches maturity.

An important detail that must be considered when planting trees in each area is the width of the tree crown at full maturity. This needs to be considered when planting to prevent conflicts caused by mature crown width with adjacent trees, wires, structures, sidewalks, traffic signs, etc. Don’t plant trees so close to each other that the crowns grow through each other.

A few good sources of suggested landscape trees and shrubs can be obtained at the Alaska Cooperative Extension office located in Palmer. Suggested reading includes, “Landscape Plants for Alaska,” “Directory of Alaska Landscape Plant Sources,” and “Growing Tree and Bush Fruits in Alaska.” These publications contain data on mature size, climatic planting zones for Alaska and Alaskan nursery sources where you can buy planting stock. “Landscape Plants for Alaska” includes a chart of the U.S.D.A. hardiness zones for Alaska. MEA’s service area can range from zone 1 to zone 4.

The illustration below provides guidelines for the proper planting of tress or ornamentals near power lines.
The picture below on the left shows the Rehor Arboretum located at MEA’s Palmer Headquarters, in its early days. The picture below on the right is a perfect example of the right tree in right place.
The pictures below are examples of trees in the wrong place which need to be removed to ensure safety and reliability for our members.