

27 trees to be cut downtown

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SANTA CRUZ — Another 27 trees in the downtown area withered so badly in the day-after-day December freeze they will have to be cut down.

"Their roots are not decayed or rotten, so they could stay up there two or three years — if you wanted to look at dead trees," said Rudy Quintanar, the city's superintendent of parks.

The ones marked for elimination at the end of June include 13 ficus trees in the Town Clock Plaza.

"At the present time, the trees have no living foliage on the limbs," reported Ray Sherrod, field supervisor in the Parks and Recreation Department. "The tissue just beneath the bark surface has no green pigment and the bark is cracking"

In similar shape are five 35-foot ficus trees on Pacific Avenue in front of the

'The trees have no living foliage on the limbs ... and the bark is cracking.'

— Ray Sherrod, Parks and Recreation Dept. supervisor

Del Mar Theater and the old Bank of America building, said Sherrod.

Three 32-foot ficus trees on Pacific in front of The Gap clothing store also died in the freeze. One New Zealand Christmas tree that is 20 feet tall on the west side of the 1300 block of Pacific will be removed.

Staff members tried to save two ficus on Walnut Street in front of the Old Theater Cafe, and another three peppermint trees on the east side of Pacific in the 1300 block.

But Quintanar said their efforts at

trimming didn't help, and the five trees will be removed.

He said the work likely will begin toward the end of the month.

"With our small tree crew we could peck away at them, but we decided to solicit some quotes from local tree companies and remove them using an outside tree contractor," said Quintanar.

Four trees were removed in April as the work to clear the freeze victims began. Quintanar said his office fielded calls at that time from concerned citizens.

"People were confused," said Quintanar. "At first they thought the trees just were being removed because of the earthquake, and they wondered why the trees were not being used for the proposed (Pacific Avenue) landscaping."

No ficus trees are planned for the new landscaping along Pacific Avenue, according to the project outlined by the Streetscape Committee.

And even if these trees were scheduled to be replanted, city officials said they likely wouldn't survive the underground work planned for Pacific Avenue this fall.

The roots, they said, are too entangled in the old layers of pipes that will be removed.

Only those trees that were set in above-ground planters likely will be saved for use in another area of the city.