

Trees hacked up and dragged away



The weeping willow in Piet Grobler Street.

Sjani Campher

Slowly but surely, the trees in Dennesig are being hacked up and dragged off for firewood.

For a town with richly sub-wooded surroundings, which was awarded the Greenest and Cleanest Municipality, it is incredibly disheartening to see the efforts of STLM to provide scenic and environmentally friendly recreational areas spoiled by local wood poachers.

Disgruntled residents contacted the Middelburg Observer after it was noted that several weeping willow trees in Piet Grobler Street became the victims of wood poachers, who severed off some of their branches.

It was later discovered that some of these branches were partially sawn off, leaving the tree's limbs dangling haphazardly, and another one torn off. Some of the wood chopped off was also left behind to waste.

During the Middelburg Observer's inspection of the scene, more and more willow trees were found with branches sawn off.

But wood poachers have not only launched an attack in Dennesig.

Another resident shared photos of the cricket fields at Kees Taljaard Stadium, where the precast fencepoles were vandalised so that the illegal tree fellers could gain access to some of the pine trees on the premises. The pine trees were

hacked up and dragged through the gap in the fence.

One resident, who wished to remain anonymous, told the Middelburg Observer that men are often seen leaving the Dennesig parks, hauling trolleys packed to the brim with wood.

"I've seen them leaving with trolleys of wood two or three days in a row. It is too much wood for one household, which suggests that they're probably selling it."

- In March, residents in Harry Gwala Street saw groups of people sawing down blue gum trees in an open field. DA Ward Councillor Johann Dyason immediately reported the groups to municipal law enforcement, who confiscated their tools and arrested them. Two weeks later, he noticed a truck loading the leftover wood and reported them again.

The group was released because they did not saw down the trees and the wood was lying around going to waste.

Residents are urged to report illegal tree fellers by calling 013 249 7024/7752/7814/7837 and reporting it as a nuisance, or 082 501 1879 for municipal law enforcement.

- The Department of Parks and Recreation planted 90 trees at the Tarries MTB course during its time of development. 56 trees were also planted by the Expanded Public Works Programme in 2020.