

A Safer Tree is a Phone Call Away

Hazardous trees pose a danger to people and property. When storms or high winds hit, limbs – and often-whole trees – fall to the ground or when the trees leaf out in the spring. This process triples their dormant weight. “Many fatal accidents and millions of dollars in property damage can be averted if homeowners heed the warning signs of a hazardous tree.” By not paying attention to your trees, you are placing your property, even your life, in potential jeopardy.” Pay close attention to shallow rooted trees (Eucalyptus and Pines), watch for ground swelling and tilting, also washing out of soil around the trunk and out going roots.

Tree Defect Clues

Fortunately, one can often read the clues that indicate that a tree is prone to failure. For instance, if a tree has large branches attached with tight, V-shaped forks, you should consider having those branches removed or lightened. Other warning signs of structural instability include cracks in the trunk or major limbs, hollow and decayed areas, or the presence of extensive dead wood. Mushrooms growing from the base of the tree or under its canopy may be a sign of root decay. On the other hand, just because you may not see mushroom growth does not mean there is no decay.

“It pays to be highly suspicious of any tree that has had construction activities – such as trenching, addition or removal of soil, digging or heavy equipment movement – anywhere under the spread of its branches.” The sign most people recognize is a hollow in a tree. But even a large hollow does not necessarily signify a tree has become hazardous. Nor does it mean the hollow should be filled.

Wood decay fungi that created the hollow in the first place are able to take advantage of the new injuries created by the rubbing and invade the remaining healthy tissue of the tree. If cavity filling is desired for aesthetic reasons, there are some new synthetic foams that can be sprayed into the cavity by professional arborists. These materials will bend with the swaying tree, reducing injury.

However, if there is really no reason to fill a cavity other than for aesthetic reasons it doesn't improve the tree's health and doesn't offer any added support. If structural support of a tree is required, a professional arborist will recommend cables, braces, tree guys, or removing the tree – not cavity filling.

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