



## TREE TIPS FOR WINTER

In the winter of 1998, the Santa Ynez Valley as well as other parts of our county experienced weather unfamiliar to our climate. Extreme rains fell in a short period of time followed by catastrophic winds which caused quite a lot of damage and change to the growth pattern of all the foliage for several years after.

The event brings me to a similar event of last winter. Which brought us almost 3 times over the normal rainfall. Fortunately, we were spared the devastating winds. This kept the damage at a minimum. The rains of "98" fell in a short period of time saturating the soil very deep, but short lived as it evaporated away from the feeder roots of most trees, or soaked in beyond them. Last winters rainfall was on the gage, more in some places than the winter of 1998.

The difference between these two events, were the quick rains of '98. A majority of water ran off not allowing as much absorption as the long sustained rainfall we experienced last winter of 2004-2005. According to my sources in the heart of the valley, we experienced approximately 35" of rainfall, which is far beyond normal for this climate. The problem with this is that it was lengthy, spread out over several months, which kept the top 4' of soil wet the entire winter. This area is where most of the feeder roots are for the majority of trees. This long term rain fall has made water more available to the trees in the spring when their normal growth pattern begins, allowing them to absorb and retain more moisture than normal. In some cases 3 to 4 times the average amounts, this will increase the tip growth of most trees by the same proportions. Smaller trees will not create safer concerns in the area of breakage due to tip weight. It will be the larger trees such as oaks, peppers and eucalyptus. These issues have already begun. As we have seen in the paper last month with the large Valley Oak collapsing in someone's yard in Fredensborg Canyon. This is not an isolated care. We have been called out on several cases involving excessive growth problems. Dealing specifically with rapid growth on limb tips only. Rain captured on limbs and leaves coupled with constant swaying in high winds in the common culprit that causes structural failure.

The solution to this problem is to thin the ends only. The common striping of the limb to the heavy end will only compound the problem by spring if the tree remains standing that long. The removal of inside growth will only force more sap to the tips and cause an even more rapid growth problem.

Deciduous trees if not thinned this year will become an even greater problem in the spring of 2006. Canyon Sycamore, Valley Oaks and Blue Oaks are just a few of the larger trees, which loose their leaves and become much lighter in the winter. As they put on weight in the spring adding to the previous years excessive growth, they become prone to structural failure. These trees should be pruned in the same manner. Ignoring inside growth, dealing mainly with the outer 1/3 of the trees leaf cover. Heading in or topping is always the last solution for any tree. Any company that suggests topping, as a common solution for this issue should be left off your list of people to hire.

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