

TREE NEWS

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YOU CAN USE

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

STORMS, DAMAGE, VEGETATION MANAGEMENT



Healthy trees provide some of their best benefits during the summer months: shade, wind breaks, aesthetic beauty, and erosion control. However, trees are also at their most vulnerable to mechanical damage during summer storms. With proper management, we're able to minimize the risk of damage to the trees themselves and surrounding property.

As with many tree management issues, problems may be avoided by pairing the right tree to the right spot. Large, fast-growing species should be placed an adequate distance from structures and power lines to minimize risk. A good practice is to plant trees at least the radius of their expected mature canopy away from obstacles. For example, a tree with a total crown spread of 50 ft at maturity should be planted 25 ft away from obstacles.

In addition to proper planting, trees may be maintained to reduce chances of damage. This is especially important for existing trees which may be closer to obstacles than is ideal. Pruning trees may reduce their vulnerability to high winds, if done properly. Crown and branch reduction will lessen the forces applied to potential breaking points during high winds. Imagine a branch as a giant lever attached to the trunk. By making the lever shorter, breaking forces are weakened greatly. Crown thinning will reduce surface area for wind to apply force, lessening the chances of breakage. A general crown cleaning can remove dead, diseased, and weak branches from trees, thus removing the possibility that they will fail in high wind. A qualified arborist will be able to prune trees while considering safety and tree health. It is important to note that improper pruning can weaken tree health and make storm damage more likely instead of less! In cases of high risk, an arborist may recommend the installation of a cabling, bracing, or lightning protection system.

Should storm damage occur, safety should be your first consideration! If you are planning on removing tree debris yourself, always stack the odds in favor of your wellbeing by wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Hardhat, eye protection, and chainsaw chaps are essential equipment for working around fallen trees. The potential energy of tree debris under pressure can be immense, and injuries are common. Large storm-damaged trees should be cleaned by professionals. If a tree is partially damaged, but not felled, some additional assessment is warranted. An arborist should assess if the tree can recover or if it should be removed. Remember that a tree in decline is more likely to fail in the next storm event! It may be wise to remove and replant in the event of serious injury. If you elect to keep the damaged tree, an arborist might recommend pruning. Storm damage wounds are jagged and present a lot of surface area for pathogens. Proper pruning can improve compartmentalization of wounds.



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