



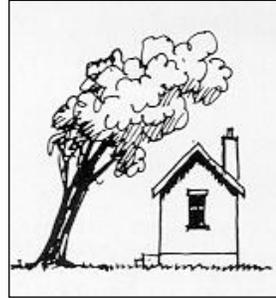
Is Your Tree a Hazard Tree?

My mother had a huge linden tree near her house. Two people could just about touch hands when they hugged the tree. A hive of honeybees created a home inside the trunk. I knew that there was a huge cavity inside. Eventually, the tree had to come down before a storm took it down, and dropped the tree onto the house.

In Saint Paul, we used to park our car under a huge, five-trunked cottonwood tree.

One day, we looked up and saw a large, dead branch, broken and suspended amongst the live branches. We moved our car in time, and eventually a wind storm loosened the branch and it fell to the ground.

Leaves are falling. It is time to look up as well as down when raking up those fallen leaves. Is that beautiful tree actually a danger to you, your neighbors and friends, or to your house or other property? Remove all targets that the tree or branches can hit, if possible, and correct the problem quickly.



Inspect all your trees and look for defects in the crown, trunk, and roots. How vigorous is your tree?

Are there any dead, decayed, or dying limbs? Are the limbs poorly attached? Well attached limbs come out from the trunk at a very broad or right angle; limbs that come together in a sharply pointed “V” are poorly secured and tend to split easily in a windstorm. Is that branch too low and will smack 6 foot five Uncle Ralph on the forehead? Are any branches rubbing together? Is the tree or bush planted too near the home or power lines? Should the tree be trimmed or removed entirely? Are the leaves healthy, or are they dying, turning color early in the season, or diseased? It might be caused by insects or diseases. Distress along one side of the tree might also indicate a root problem on that side of the tree – cut or dying roots, or stem girdling roots growing into the trunk and cutting off food supplies on that side of the tree.

Look for holes, disease and decay, fungus and mushrooms, or splits along the trunk. Often, a cavity may be detected by pushing a stiff wire into a soft spot or opening. Some hazard trees may look healthy, but are actually shells of bark and exterior wood surrounding an interior, empty space. A strong windstorm will take them down. Is the tree straight, or is it starting to lean dangerously (over 15 degrees from vertical)? Sudden leaning is an especially dangerous sign; the tree should be removed immediately.

Are the roots healthy? Construction, grade change, compaction, and the adding of extra soil can injure or smother roots. Roots need oxygen and water to thrive. If half of the roots become cut or damaged during construction, the tree will probably need to be replaced. Any injury to the roots can damage the entire tree.

Hiring a professional arborist to evaluate your tree is a wise investment. Make sure the arborist is certified by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA certified). Check his insurance coverage and get references. Fly by night tree surgeons and door to door money-eager amateurs with chain saws can cost you money and heart ache in the long run.

Keep your plants healthy this fall by continuing to water well until the ground freezes. Even big trees benefit from extra watering at this time of the year. Keeping your plants well hydrated will help them survive winter in good condition.

Trees need our love, too.

Happy Gardening, Joe Baltrukonis