

National Arborist Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Eight Reasons Why Trees Die

Accidents. Automobiles, storms and even lawnmowers can cause bark damage and wounds on trees. One can avoid tree wounding by planting them in sheltered locations or by providing some sort of barrier. Be very careful while using lawn mowers and weed trimmers, as careless use can damage the roots and bark of even large trees. Check for any damage incurred during heavy storms, and treat it promptly. Remember, the integrity and stability of a tree changes over time.

Too Much Herbicide. When used properly, chemicals can benefit trees and their growth. Improperly used, herbicides can interact with the roots and damage the tree's health. Make sure the instructions for application are carefully followed. Seek professional help whenever you are not sure.

Soil Compaction. This is a slow tree damage process, often with few or no other signs of the cause. In compacted soil, pore space has been reduced and roots do not get enough oxygen. Often the tree slowly declines and dies. Soil compaction can be avoided by aerating the soil, by mulching and by preventing soil disruption around trees on construction sites.

Bad Planting. Planting is one of the most important processes to ensure the tree's health and longevity. Make sure the planting hole is two to three times wider but no deeper than the tree's root ball. Plant trees promptly and make sure they get adequate water so that roots do not dry.

Watering. Both over- and under-watering can be harmful for trees. Watering is critical for all trees in dry spells as well as young or newly transplanted trees. Monitoring the soil moisture is one of the best ways of making sure that adequate water is provided.

Location, Location, Location. Trees need proper sunlight and should be appropriate for the climatic conditions, or plant hardiness zone, of the area. Visualize the actual height the tree could reach and make sure there are no power lines in its path and the tree is a good distance from the house, other structures and other plants.

Painting Tree Wounds and Filling Cavities with Concrete. Paint on tree wounds will actually trap moisture in the wood, increasing the chances of decay. If you want to paint a wound for cosmetic reasons, use a very thin coating of wound dressing. Trunk cavities filled with cement make the tree unusually rigid, which can restrict the tree's movement in high winds and leave the upper portion of the canopy to bear the brunt of the force.

Improper Pruning. Pruning should follow standards established in ANSI A300, published by the American National Standards Institute. Proper pruning is a tree health treatment, but one of the most neglected tree care practices.

Have a professional arborist evaluate your trees. This will help you determine potential weaknesses and dangers. Ask the arborist to look for stress cracks, weak branches and other subtle indicators of potential hazards. Check the tree for dead or partially attached limbs hung up in higher branches that could fall and cause damage or injury during a storm.

For a list of professional arborists in your area, or to get information on the care and maintenance of trees, contact the National Arborist Association, 1-800-733-2622 or by a zip code search on the NAA's Web site: WWW.NATLARB.COM. The NAA is a 60-year-old public and professional resource on trees and arboriculture. Its more than 2,300 members all recognize stringent safety and performance standards, and are required to carry liability insurance.