

National Arborist Association

Fax: 1-603-672-2613
Route 101, PO Box 1094
Amherst, NH 03031-1094

Contact: Sachin Mohan
Public Relations Director
1-800-733-2622

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Health Check for Trees

As trees grow, they undergo chemical and biological changes. Adverse weather conditions and the care (or lack of care) they receive from their owners can affect the structure and health of the tree. Peter Gerstenberger, Director of Safety and Education at the National Arborist Association, the trade organization supporting tree care companies throughout the world, advises home owners that, "Due to the catastrophic weather conditions throughout the country over the past few months, it is advisable to do a health check for your trees to prevent future damage."

A tree is deemed hazardous if it has a structural defect which may cause the tree (or a portion) to fall and inflict damage to life or property. Owners of such hazardous trees can be held liable for damages. Here are some warning signs home owners can look for when examining their trees.

Top and Crown

- * **Dead branches:** These are limbs ready to fall at any time. An accident waiting to happen, these are considered red flags and need immediate attention.
- * **Crossed or rubbing branches:** In case of heavy winds, branches crossing or rubbing against each other are likely to break and fall. Such branches need to be pruned to lighten or completely remove them.
- * **Obvious defects:** Look for weakening defects such as hollows, large wounds, or splits. These structural defects may predispose the branch to failure.
- * **Tree history:** It is important to consider the history of the tree to understand its current health condition. If the tree has been topped—a method of pruning that damages the tree's health—has suffered storm damage or was infected by fungus or insects, it might have a weakened structure.
- * **Check to see if the tree is dead or dying.** If so, it needs to be removed immediately.

The Trunk

- * **Trees with forked trunks** might not be structurally sound. Trees with tight forks or V-shaped trunks need special attention because they are more prone to failure than wider U-shaped forks.
- * **Examine the trunk for cracks and wounds** caused by storms. Wounds are an opening for decay, which can be identified by irregular growth of the trunk or by fruiting bodies of fungi attached to the trunk.

Roots

- * **It is difficult to detect root decay.** Look for mushrooms on or near the base of the tree.
- * **Damaged roots** lose the ability to support the trunk and the crown. Root damage is often the result of construction activity within the root zone. Severed or weakened roots are more prone to infection.

It is difficult to perform some of the above tests without professional help. Have a professional arborist evaluate your trees. Remember, a tree is a living thing, and its integrity and stability changes over time. Don't assume that a tree that has survived 10 severe storms will necessarily survive another.

For a list of professional arborists in your area, contact the National Arborist Association, 1-800-733-2622, or perform your own 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.