

For Immediate Release

Bare Trees Prime for Inspection and Pruning

CHAMPAIGN, IL (November 2012) – Leaves are now on the ground, but trees still need attention. The dormant season is actually a good time to inspect most non-flowering trees for potential hazards and to prune them accordingly.

Trees are dormant in the winter, making pruning easier because you can better see a tree's structure when no leaves are on the branches. Without leaves, it is easier to spot dead or broken branches that need to be removed in order to help avoid breakage resulting from harsh winter weather.

Deciding what and where to prune involves an understanding of basic tree biology, sharp tools, and an artful eye. The International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) offers practical suggestions for reducing the likelihood your trees will not fall victim to Mother Nature's unpredictable temperament. "Recognizing and reducing tree hazards not only increases the safety of your property and that of your neighbors, but also improves the tree's health and may increase its longevity," says Jim Skiera, Executive Director of ISA.

Beware of potential hazards. Being aware of problems before they present themselves could spare you money in repairs. Survey your property for trees that show signs of decay. ISA suggests looking for these signs of instability:

- Cracks in the trunks of major limbs
- Hollow, aged, and decayed trees
- Conks on trunk or mushrooms at the base of the tree
- Dead branches
- Carpenter ants, honey bees, woodpeckers, and other animals which live in decayed or hollow trees
- One-sided or significantly leaning trees

Take action to remedy potential targets. Inspect your trees for branches that could cause damage to your property before a storm hits:

- Branches that hang over the house, near the roof
- Branches in close proximity to power lines

Take precautions to prevent damage. Once problems have been detected, a proactive approach to tackling them is advised:

- Remove dead, diseased, or damaged limbs.
- Consider removing trees with large cavities of decay.
- Leaning trees may indicate a root problem; have them inspected.
- Branches too close to your house, a building, or the street should be pruned to provide clearance.
- Branches that are too close or touching utility lines need to be pruned or removed. If this work is needed, report it to your local utility company—DO NOT prune the tree yourself.

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Know your tree species. Some species are more inclined to storm damage. An ISA Certified Arborist will have the knowledge necessary to determine which trees have the hardiness needed to withstand harsh weather conditions.

Do not top your trees. Untrained individuals may urge you to cut back all of the branches, on the mistaken assumption that it will help avoid breakage in future storms. However, ISA Certified Arborists warn against the dangers of “topping,” the cutting back of main branches to a predetermined point without regard to the tree’s natural structure. The stubs that remain are not strong enough to grow back as a single, dominant branch. Instead, a flush of re-growth surrounds the stub. Trees that have been topped are also prone to internal decay. While healthy trees are able to seal wounds that careful pruning leaves, topping leaves a tree with many severe wounds that it is unable to properly compartmentalize, resulting in deterioration.

Protect your assets. Properly maintained trees may increase property value by up to 20%. Find out if your homeowner’s insurance will cover any damage your landscape may sustain due to unnatural causes and include the total value of your trees when listing your assets for coverage. An ISA Certified Arborist who has experience appraising trees can provide an estimated value by inspecting your trees. Be sure to document the value of potential loss with photos of the trees and the evaluation by the arborist.

Hire an ISA Certified Arborist. When hiring a professional to assess and repair the damage after a storm, be sure you are selecting the right arborist for the job.

- Consumers are urged to look for arborists who possess a membership or certification from such professional organizations as ISA, as this demonstrates an arborist’s willingness to stay up-to-date on the latest techniques and information.
- Ask for proof of insurance. Responsible professionals carry personal and property damage insurance as well as worker’s compensation insurance. Hiring an uninsured individual could result in the homeowner being held responsible for damages and injuries that occur as a result of the job.
- Don’t be afraid to ask for references and don’t hesitate to check them, either by calling or visiting the site of the work.
- Don’t settle on the lowest bid. Getting several estimates and comparing credentials and services helps you determine which company will offer the sort of professionalism you require to protect your investment.
- Be wary of individuals who solicit business door to door. Especially in the wake of large storms, most reputable tree care companies are too busy to seek work in this way.

For more information on tree care and how to find an ISA Certified Arborist in your area, visit www.treesaregood.org.

About ISA

The International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), headquartered in Champaign, Ill., is a nonprofit organization supporting tree care research and education around the world. To promote the importance of arboriculture, ISA manages the consumer education web site, www.treesaregood.org, which fulfills the association’s mission to help educate the public about the importance and value of proper tree care. Also, as part of ISA’s dedication to the care and preservation of shade and ornamental trees, it offers the only internationally-recognized certification program in the industry. For more information on ISA and Certified Arborists, visit isa-arbor.com.



International Society of Arboriculture

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