

Tree Talk



Fall 2007 - CON

A PARTNERSHIP WORKING TOWARD
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY FORESTS

Preparing for Winter

The following are tips for preparing trees to winter well. Consider these as options to offer to your clients, or as do-it-yourself information that you can provide to them. They will be grateful to protect the investment they have made in their trees.

Water Deeply - Winter temperatures can fluctuate and when weather temporarily warms, roots draw moisture from the soil. Avoid winter dehydration by deep watering trees before the ground freezes. It is especially important for young evergreens. Apply water under the entire canopy to a depth of 18-24”.

Avoid Root Ice Cubes - On the other hand, you do not want to keep the soil so saturated that freezing temperatures freeze all that wet into an ice cube. If a dam has been built around the roots for summer watering, knock a hole in it for winter drainage.

Build Bagels, Not Volcanoes - Applying a 3-4 inch deep layer of mulch under your trees helps keep the soil moist and protects roots from freezing temperatures. However, do not mound mulch against the tree! Keep it at least 4 inches away from the trunk to prevent rot or damage from burrowing rodents.

Remove stakes - If stakes have been on a tree for over a year, it is time to remove them. If stake removal is not a service that you offer your clients, be sure to let them know it is something that they need to do.

Protecting Trees from Storm Damage

Bob Wilson, UI Extension Educator

This past year has been extremely hard on a lot of trees, not to mention the houses and cars they fell on. When the wind howls, limbs can snap, trunks can break, and whole trees may be thrown up by the roots. Although, there isn't anything you can do about the weather, there are some things you can do to prevent the amount of destruction that results.

Choose the right tree. Some trees are stronger than others. In general, trees that grow very quickly are weak-wooded and short-lived. Cottonwoods, locust, and some elms and maples suffer this shortcoming. The point of attachment of a branch also may be strong or weak. Branches that attach at a narrow angle with the trunk can break more easily under wind or snow loads. If the angle is narrow, as a branch grows the area between the trunk and branch is filled with bark. This condition is called “included bark” and generally weakens the attachment. Eventually the growing trunk and branch will push against each other as they both increase in diameter. This force can be sufficient to cause a crack to form which will later fail. Broad branch angles are much stronger.

Grow a healthy tree. A healthy tree can endure a great deal of wind without sustaining damage. This starts with planting a healthy tree at the correct depth to allow a strong root system to develop free of stem girdling roots. Avoid planting in poorly drained or waterlogged soils where roots can't develop well because of insufficient oxygen. Break up compacted ground over a large area and install drainage to the site if necessary before planting.

Pruning. Proper pruning and training a tree when it is young can help a tree develop strong structure. The cost of pruning young trees is small compared to the cost of corrective pruning on older trees, removal of hazard trees, or the damage they can cause when they fail. All conifers and most deciduous trees are best trained with a single, strong leader. If two or more tops develop (called co-dominants) the angle between them typically is narrow and prone to failure. Additional tops should either be removed or shortened to remove dominance (called subordination), leaving the strongest and straightest as the trunk.

While good pruning can strengthen a tree, bad pruning can weaken tree structure. Topping a tree is the easiest way to do this. Although there are appropriate ways to shorten a too-tall tree through crown reduction, simply cutting major stems leaving an aerial stump is very damaging to the tree. These cuts



This tree split out where multiple tops converged from one spot. Early pruning to establish a single trunk and good branch structure could have prevented this damage.



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Upcoming Events

November 2 – Tree Care Workshop “Preventing Storm Damage” at Idaho Department of Lands, 3780 Industrial Avenue South, Coeur d’Alene

November 9 – Tree Care Workshop “Tree Planting Panel Discussion and Demonstration” at Spokane County Conservation District, 210 N. Havana, Spokane

Contact Us at:

Coeur d’Alene 769-2266

Post Falls 773-8147

Hayden 209-0987

Spokane County Conservation

Dist.—509-535-7274

OR

E-mail: karenh@cdaid.org

Write: c/o Urban Forestry, City of Cd’A

710 E. Mullan Avenue

Coeur d’Alene, ID 83814

Tree Care Web Links

International Society of Arboriculture: www.treesaregood.com

National Arbor Day Foundation: www.arborday.org

City of Coeur d’Alene: www.cdaid.org

City of Hayden: www.cityofhaydenid.us

City of Post Falls: www.postfallsidaho.org

Spokane County Conservation District: www.sccd.org

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never heal and will encourage decay that substantially shortens the life of the tree. Deciduous trees will respond to these cuts by growing sprouts from the cut branch. Since these new branches have not grown with the trunk as it developed, they are only weakly attached and will break under a load. I witnessed severe damage to many topped trees after a particularly severe ice storm broke all of the sprouted branches and left the tree looking like the stays of a battered umbrella.

Where to Get Help. In order to prevent a worst-case scenario, there are several things you can do. First, check your trees every year for health. Look for decay, loose bark, splits, heavy weeping on the trunk, and either excessive lean or a change in lean that can indicate decay and structural deficiencies. Changes in growth and color can tell you that the tree is under stress and should be investigated to determine the cause. Structural pruning of young trees is within the ability of most homeowners.

For assistance, contact your city forester or the UI Extension Office at 263-8511; or view the ISA publication at http://www.treesaregood.com/treecare/pruning_young.aspx. If you need professional assistance with pruning or tree risk evaluation, contact a certified arborist or tree care professional.

Landscape of Excellence

Community Canopy announces its *Landscape of Excellence* recognition program.

We will be giving public recognition to commercial, retail, church and subdivision ‘commons’ properties that have done an excellent job of landscaping and tree stewardship.

If you would like to nominate a business, church or subdivision landscape area that has exemplified quality landscaping, please contact your Community Canopy representative.



Debunked! - Balancing Crown to Roots

After careful consideration, you’ve chosen the right tree for the right place. You’ve planted your new tree in a wide hole with the trunk flare visible at or slightly above ground level. You’ve generously provided water and just the right amount of mulch. Now is the time to put your pruning tools away for at least one year. It’s time to abandon the adage “prune the top to match the roots”. The belief was that because roots were removed when the tree was harvested, branches should also be eliminated to reduce water stress. This old rule is not true.

The root system is reduced (by more than 80%) when digging trees for transplanting, but research shows that new root formation depends on energy production from the leaves and chemical signals from the buds. Removing healthy branches will inhibit root initiation and growth. Without root recovery, trees will not thrive. On this subject, prominent tree researcher Alex Shigo also points out that removing living branches takes food from the tree since trees store energy reserves in twigs and branches as well as the trunk.

So, the best treatment for young trees is to prune only the dead and damaged branches after planting and wait to begin structural pruning until after *at least* one full season of growth in the new location.