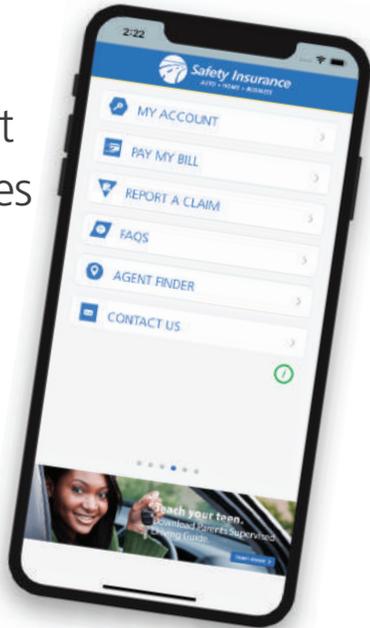


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Still Standing: Trim Your Risk of Tree Problems



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Falling trees and limbs cause hundreds of millions of dollars of damage each year, as well as personal injuries and deaths. Windstorms and ice storms are leading causes of such damage and injuries.

Tree related damage is usually apparent. Limbs crashing through a roof or onto automobiles or power lines are hard to miss. Sometimes the damage is so severe that entire homes are destroyed, as trees can topple onto a house if they are uprooted.

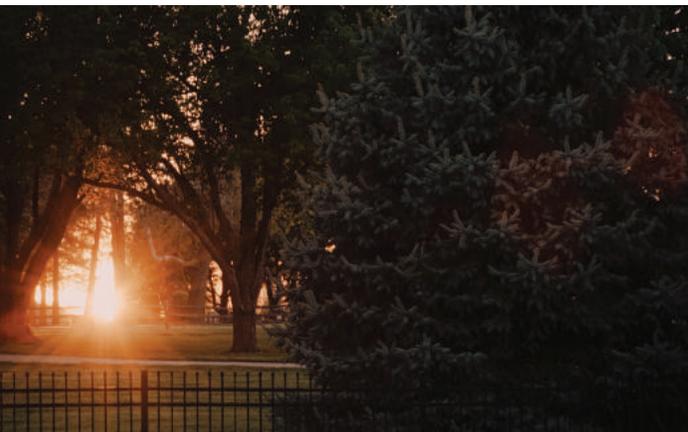
Extensive underground tree damage can also be a result of uprooted trees or large tree roots. Utility lines, septic systems, sidewalks, house foundations, and underground communications cables can all be affected.

Some trees are also notorious for aggressively sending out roots that can damage the foundation of a house, buckle sidewalks or plug up septic systems, forcing homeowners to spend thousands of dollars for repairs.

The kinds of trees in a yard, their proximity to a house and the care they receive all affect safety and the potential for damage or personal injury.

Appropriate Species

Even the best care cannot overcome poor tree selection. Thousands of homes have been damaged because nearby trees were wrong for the soil or region where they were planted. Shallow-rooted trees growing in soft soil can easily topple onto a house in a strong wind. City foresters, county extension offices, local nurseries and landscape firms can provide advice on tree selection for your area and soil conditions.



PROPER PRUNING

Good pruning, including prompt removal of diseased, damaged or dead plant parts can help limit the spread of harmful insects and disease and reduce the possibility of future storm damage. Pruning can also promote better air circulation and sunlight penetration, while providing proper shape and improving the health and vigor of the plant. Do not over prune (a practice called “hat racking”), as this will significantly weaken a tree. Check local tree regulations prior to pruning tree or removal.

- Avoid pruning branches flush to the trunk as doing so may open the plant to possible decay or insect damage.
- Begin by making a cut partway through the bottom of any limb to be trimmed, a few inches from the trunk. Then, cut through the limb just above the first cut. This ensures that when the limb falls, it will not tear off a long strip of bark on the way down.
- Finish by cutting off the few inches sticking out from the trunk. Be sure to leave the “branch collar,” the swollen area of trunk tissue that forms around the base of a branch. Leaving the branch collar protects the main trunk from damage.

SOME POTENTIAL PROBLEMS TO WATCH FOR:

- Cracks in the trunk and major limbs.
- Hollow trees.
- Trees that look one-sided or lean significantly.
- Branches hanging over the house near the roof.
- Limbs in contact with power lines.
- Decayed trees or mushrooms growing from the bark, indicating a decayed or weakened stem.
- V-shaped forks rather than U-shaped ones. V-shaped are more likely to split.
- Crossing branches that rub or interfere with one other.

If you see any of the above issues, but cannot take corrective action on your own, then consult a tree care professional.



AFTER A STORM: CARING FOR STORM DAMAGED TREES

- Plan ahead before deciding what to do with fallen trees. In general, it is best to reset only smaller trees, since large trees will be weakened and may fall again.
- If you are going to leave tree stumps, cut them off flush with the ground. If you plan to remove them, leave four feet of stump standing. Removal will be cheaper and easier if stumps can be pulled out instead of dug out.
- Cut off broken or torn limbs to avoid unnecessary bark stripping.
- When straightened, uprooted trees will require bracing for a long time. Before you reset a tree, cut, smooth, and paint all jagged and irregular root breaks. Water the tree well and fertilize.
- After repairing trees, continue to care for them. Check soil moisture regularly.
- Prune a damaged tree just enough to balance the loss of roots. Cut out broken, diseased and malformed branches to give the tree a desirable shape.