

Winter is just around the corner. And, with luck, it will be a wet one! It's time to look at the trees around you to see if they're ready to "weather the storm". In checking them for health and safety, here are some areas to consider.

**LOCATION.** First check the trees that are around the house, garage, and picnic areas. If a large branch or limb were to break away and fall, would it hurt any people, animals or property? Or, is it in a spot where water could puddle or steadily run around its base, which could cause root or trunk rot?

**HISTORY AND GROWTH PATTERNS.** If you have lived near a tree for a while you may have noticed if it has lost limbs or branches recently. Also, it may be growing beyond it's normal form into a strange or visibly dangerous form.



Is one tree growing so broad or fast that it is crowding out another tree, robbing it of light and growth space? You might notice areas in the tree canopy that are dead or declining. Are there any branches growing into power lines or cables?

**STRUCTURE.** Now, take a good look at the trunk, limbs and branches of the tree. You're looking for wholes and cracks.

Cracks are major starting points for trunk and branch failures. Crack drying is just as important a factor leading to failures as overloading and decaying wood. Internal cracks often form after a tree has been wounded. A common wound on branches is caused by the removal of branch collars - flush cuts - when branches are cut off other branches.

The cracks may enlarge as branch loading - from wind, rain, fruit, more leaves - increases or as hot, dry weather dries out the crack.

