57° F
HI:68 LO:59

Protecting Trees from Storm Damage

Before a storm, preparation is everything, arborist says.

By Oliver Peterson | Email the author | August 15, 2011

Recommend 7 people recommend this. Be the first of your friends. 0 Comments

Related Topics: Arborist, CW Arborists, Michael Gaines, and Tree Care

« Back to Patch's House & Home

Caring for trees is not as simple as some might believe, but disaster can be avoided by recognizing dangerous situations that are not obvious to the untrained eye.

That was the message Michael Gaines, the owner of CW Arborists, conveyed during a free class on storm preparation and some basics about proper tree care at the Old Whalers Church in Sag Harbor on Thursday.

Before members of his team and a small group of interested participants, Gaines explained why so many trees fail during inclement weather, be it rain, wind, lightning or snow and ice.

Gaines said trees suffer various types of damage during storms, including blow-over, stem failure, crown twists, root failure, branch failure and lightning damage.

Wind could knock trees into homes, bring down electrical lines or even take down structural elements of a building, just as a hurricane did to the steeple of the Old Whalers Church in 1938, Gaines said. He said a qualified arborist can help avoid such damage by removing branches or using support cables on at-risk trees, but everything must be cut properly to keep out moisture and avoid future deterioration. It's unfortunate, but sometimes trees have to be removed entirely, he said.

"Lightning strikes a lot of trees, especially if they're not protected," the master arborist said, describing other storm dangers. Gaines said the effects of lightning aren't always immediately apparent, and there could be damage that causes a tree to fail months or even years later.

During the winter months, Gaines said ice and snow could weigh down branches and cause breakage. He added that it's usually better not to try shaking the white stuff loose, as many homeowners do, because this can cause more damage.

Before a storm, preparation is everything, Gaines said, noting that it's important to be aware of potential hazards and deal with them.

When dealing with damage after a storm, Gaines said time is not as much of a factor. He said it's best to first assess the damage and then find a person who can recognize whether the integrity of a tree has been compromised. "A lot of people will be knocking at your door," he said, adding that a person might not have the knowledge or skill necessary just because they have a ladder and a chainsaw. "They're looking for quick money," he said, but the work isn't urgent. "You have time, you can repair it down the road."

Gaines said wounded trees could create hollow spots when healing, which causes weak points for later failure, so they need to be dealt with properly. He noted that too much pruning can hurt trees, and big cuts on old trees can also be problematic. And sometimes, he said, it's best to leave trees alone

and not prune them at all.

“Trees are patient and continue to be so after a storm. We need to be more patient in the decisions to repair and the decisions to remove,” Gaines explained. “They adapt.”

Gaines said he created Thursday’s class to help spread awareness about the complexities of proper tree work. He noted that an ounce of prevention could equal a pound of cure.

Gaines has been an International Society of Arboriculture board certified master arborist since 2006 and he is a member of the Long Island Arboricultural Association and the Tree Care Industry Association. He opened CW Arborists in 2008 and recently moved into a new office in Sagaponack.

He plans to hold another public class in the Bridgehampton/Southampton area this fall.

Recommend

7 people recommend this. Be the first of your friends.

Follow this article Submit a tip Add photos & video 0 Comments

Leave a comment

Submit ›

Sponsored Links

Angie's List Tree Service
Need Tree's Trimmed? Read Reviews. Find Top Rated Local Companies.
www.AngiesList.com

Tree Services
Read Reviews & Get Quotes From Local Tree Experts. Free Search!
www.ServiceMagic.com

Advertise

Advertise on Patch and reach potential customers in your backyard and beyond. Click here for more information.
Learn more »

Volunteer

If you want to help local causes, or your cause needs local help, your next click should be right here.
Learn more »

Contribute

- Send us news tips
- Put an event on the calendar
- Announce something to everyone