

## **Identify and Remove Hazard Trees Now Before Winter Weather Begins**

As the 2014-2015 winter approaches, the Southampton Shade Tree Commission is reminding residents to check their trees for any signs of stress or death and to also identify high risk trees. Now is a good time to call in a Certified Tree Expert to evaluate your tree conditions and hire a contractor to safely remove any hazardous trees. You too can look for the obvious hallmarks of problematic trees, but sometimes problems can be hidden.

“Strong winds, ice accrual, and wet snow accumulation can easily bring down dead, diseased, or injured trees and result in substantial property damage. Healthy trees have more of a tolerance to the harsh, winter conditions.” said Doug Melegari, Vice Chairperson of the Southampton Shade Tree Commission. “If hazardous trees are near utility wires, they can also cause communication and electric outages.”

Dead trees can fracture in any location, at any given moment. These include at the ground line, just above the stump, just below the lowest branch, or anywhere in the crown. Any dead tree should be removed as it has an extreme, imminent risk of failing. In addition, a dead tree provides a perfect breeding ground for parasites and funguses, all of which can rapidly spread to healthier trees resulting in additional tree damage.

Injured or diseased trees can also fail if not promptly taken care of. Residents can identify these trees by looking for peeling bark, cracks, bore holes, soil mounding around the base of the tree, fungal fruiting bodies, leaves that appear to be out of character, a substantial lean that has increased over a period of time, several partially dead or dead branches, or a substantial amount of missing branches that created a lot of wounds or one large wound.

High risk trees are those that are growing in a spot that just isn't ideal. This includes trees growing up against blacktop and sidewalks or trees growing in a wet location that frequently retains water. While these trees aren't necessarily an immediate hazard, they should be identified and monitored carefully for any signs of stress. The root systems on these trees usually can't grow deep and wide enough to support the tree, increasing the risk that they may fail. Sometimes, if they are near pavement or a sidewalk, you will even notice the pavement or sidewalk lifting.

“Typically, sustained winds of 31-39 MPH or wind gusts of 46-57 MPH can be just enough to take down weakened or dead trees. Usually a little more than two-tenths of an inch of ice or three inches of wet, heavy snow can also take them down.” according to Commissioner Melegari. “I have seen trees develop obvious problems within a few weeks' time, so it is important to frequently evaluate them.”

Residents are also encouraged to help the Shade Tree Commission identify hazardous trees on municipal roadways. In 2013, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection awarded Southampton Township with a grant of \$20,000.00 through the DEP's State Forestry Services Grant Program. The funds were used to procure a bucket truck for our Department of Public

Works. This bucket truck is being used for hazardous tree removal and tree trimming in Southampton Township's Right-of-Ways (ROW) and on municipal maintained properties.

The grant program is designed to promote Community Stewardship of forests and trees, improve protections from wildfires and other natural hazards, and restore forests affected by the tree-killing insects. Most of this funding comes from the State's Community Stewardship Incentive Program (CSIP), which assists municipalities in implementing management goals and practices as outlined in their Community Forestry Management Plans. Last year, a maximum of \$20,000 was awarded to two recipients, with each recipient providing a 50% matching contribution in the form of in kind hours as well as financial support.

If you see a hazardous tree along a township roadway and believe it is in the ROW, please fill out a form and mail the completed version to Shade Tree Commission, 5 Retreat Road, Southampton, New Jersey, 08088. The form can be found on the Southampton website by going to: <http://www.southamptonnj.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Tree-Removal-Request-Form.pdf>. You can also request a form by calling 609-859-2736.

"We are a Tree City USA community and this year we were also awarded with a Tree City Growth Award. The Commission values trees and believe they are one of our greatest assets. When a tree fails, it makes everyone look at trees negatively. We want to prevent that." Commissioner Melegari said.