

Archive for May, 2010

Be Safe

Thursday, May 13th, 2010

Pruning a tree in your own yard may seem harmless enough, but it can put you in touch with sudden death. A ladder, tree pruner, or even a tree limb can create a direct pathway for electricity from an overhead power line to you. **Be safe! Look up in all directions and keep these safety tips in mind, if there are overhead lines nearby:**

1. Don't try to prune the tree yourself. Hire a professional to do it, or call the local utility company for advice.
2. Never touch a broken limb that's on an overhead line.
3. Never touch a downed line, even if it appears to be "dead."
4. Follow a 10 foot rule: Keep all equipment (including antennas) at least ten feet away from overhead lines at all times.
5. The wind or a child's own weight can bend a limb onto a line. Warn your children not to climb a tree or build a tree house close to an overhead line. They shouldn't be building a tree house anyway. It injures the tree, and is usually structurally unsound. Kids aren't construction engineers.
6. If there are no overhead lines on your property, your service is underground. So.....before you dig for any purpose, call your One-Call Underground Hotline, so utilities can come out and mark where the lines are. In Missouri, the number is 1-800-Dig-Rite.

Planting and caring for trees need not be dangerous if proper precautions are observed. **Be safe!**



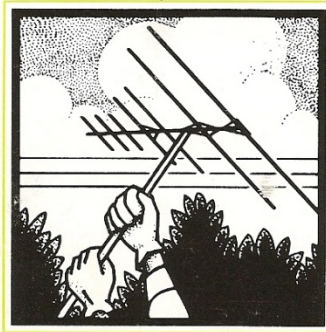
Never trim trees near overhead lines.



Don't touch broken limbs on a line.



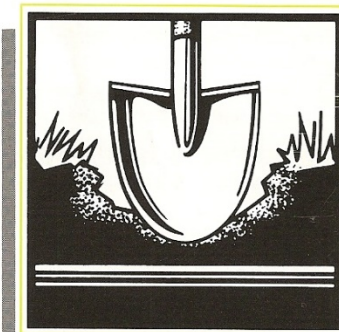
Stay away from downed lines.



Antennas and ladders can contact danger.



Don't climb trees near overhead lines.



Never dig near underground lines.

To Stake Or Not To Stake

Monday, May 31st, 2010

People sometimes wonder if they need to stake a newly-planted tree in order to make it more stable while it is establishing its root system. In general, the answer is no; staking is not necessary if the tree will stand on its own after it is planted. Most do, even balled and burlapped trees several feet tall. Smaller trees almost never “slump” over after planting, if the job is done correctly. However, there are always exceptions to any generalization.

I have found staking to be most useful on small trees or seedlings. Why? To prevent damage from errant lawnmowers (the person not the machine). The stakes serve as a location indicator more than a support, and, in fact, the small tree really doesn't need to be guyed or tied to the stake at all, since it will usually support itself.

Stakes may be needed to prevent root ball shifting when fairly large balled and burlapped trees are planted. If guy wires or support ties are needed, they should be attached strongly enough to provide support, but flexibly enough to allow for 6-8 inches of sway. The best guying materials are wide and flexible, such as horticultural tape or canvas. If guy wires are used, place them through tubing or hose sections to prevent the wire from rubbing the bark. All guys/ties should be placed low on the stem, and should be removed as soon as the tree can stand alone – usually 3 months, but no longer than a year.

If you are unsure about whether or not to use stakes, ask a local expert for their advice. A certified nurseryman or arborist would be a good choice, and most would probably forgo a fee to answer a simple inquiry. Another good source may be a master gardener, or a friendly forester. However, as I said at the beginning, if it can stand upright when you finish planting, it probably doesn't need to be staked; except to save it from the wild-eyed lawnmower riding his new lawn tractor.