

Archive for January, 2011

Winter Work

Saturday, January 8th, 2011

Winter is a good time to inspect your landscape trees, and make notes on what needs to be done in/before spring green up. During this dormant period, problems in the upper crowns of both young and older trees can be more easily seen due to the lack of foliage. Start your observations at either the top or bottom of the crown and work your way systematically to the other end of the crown, making notes as you go. Identify problems such as cavities (rotten spots), broken branches, branch stubs, limbs that cross and rub, gouges or unnaturally loose or peeling bark, and (my favorite) bad branch angles.

If you cannot inspect your trees for problems, now is also a good time to hire an arborist to identify any problems. In addition, if you want the problem taken care of right away, many tree care providers are less busy this time of the year, and can do the job in a more timely manner than they can perhaps do later in the spring. Some providers also offer discounts on work done during the winter, so it might be worth looking into. At the very least, you should be able to get your work scheduled at a favorable time if you do want to wait until spring.

Winter is also a good time to have a large tree removed, if that is what is necessary. Lack of foliage makes cleanup easier, and, if the ground is frozen, there is less lawn damage from equipment and worker activity to worry about.

Having good notes is also helpful in prioritizing work and budgeting expenses if you plan to do the work yourself.

Take advantage of the dormant period to help you plan ahead for tree care needs and activities.

Winter Doins'

Monday, January 24th, 2011

I've noted in previous entries that winter time doesn't have to be a wash out with regard to tree care. It is a good time to plan for the coming growing season, especially in regard to identifying pruning needs for your trees, since the dormant period allows one a better view of the crown structure; especially for deciduous trees since the leaves are gone. There are also other things you can do to make the winter blahs more bearable, plus they might give you a head start on the upcoming busy season. Following are some ideas, and they are certainly not all inclusive, but some may be helpful:

1. Read some tree care brochures. Make sure you are current with regard to the latest popular-editions of tree care information that is distributed by organizations like the Missouri Department of Conservation, Forest Releaf of Missouri, The National Arbor Day Foundation, and our own Missouri Community Forestry Council. Do some web surfing, if you prefer, to check for any updated information that may have recently been published or posted.
2. Make some calls to local nurseries and quiz them about what plant materials they hope to have available, come spring, and ask if they expect to have a goodly supply of some species of interest, or if you need to make a reservation for a particularly desired species that may not be available elsewhere.
3. Check your tools. Repair any that are fixable and make sure sharp edges are sharp, handles are tight, etc. If you need to replace a tool, check around now. Your friendly "tool place" might have some leftover

items from last year that they would be glad to sell now at a very favorable discounted rate before the new merchandise begins to arrive.

4. Make appointments with tree care providers now, even though their service(s) may not be needed until later in the spring. It's nice to be at the head of the line once their busy season starts.

5. If you have a tree that needs to be removed, either by you or a tree service company, keep a close eye on the weather and try to get the job done during a fair weather window that comes every now and then during Missouri winters. Some pruning can also be done, especially in late winter, when a window opens. Be ready to take advantage of such an opportunity.

Winter doesn't have to be a "lost period" for tree care. However, the activities may not always be up close and personal, but sometimes mundane sounding activities (like reading a brochure, or tightening a shovel handle) can save time later, which can then be devoted to those important tree care functions required when the growing season kicks into high gear.