

Homeowner's Tree Checkup Guide

When homeowners know a few simple things to look for, they can do their own basic tree checkup. Ideally, a homeowner would let a tree professional, such as a certified or consulting arborist, perform the initial checkup. Request time for the arborist to take you on a summary "walk through" of your grounds. This will help you make better decisions and educate you for the future. Reading over this checkup guide before the inspection will help you know questions to ask before and during the inspection. Subsequent to the professional's inspection, you will be better able to perform future checkups on your own. However, do not let your checkups substitute for the advice of a professional if anything potentially hazardous or serious is found.

A scaled map or drawing of your property will be very useful for marking the location of important existing features such as trees, buildings, utilities, etceteras. Most homeowners have a small map of their property included with the property's purchasing and/or financing documents. This map is called the property plat map. It's best not to write on your file copy of the plat map. Make one copy or a tracing of the plat for future copy making and then some other copies for actual checkup purposes. You may want to enlarge the copy plat so you have more room for handwritten notes. Enlarge to a known scale if possible.

The plat generally includes the footprint of a house on the property. If you do not have a copy of your plat, another option is to use your county real estate parcel maps. The maps do not include a footprint of your house. You will need to draw that in yourself. This is where a scaled map becomes very useful. If your map is scaled, you can use a measuring tape to measure your house dimensions and locate the house on the map relative to property lines.

In addition to the house, you will want to locate other significant structures such as gazebos, driveway, walkways, patios, etc. Also it is very useful to identify where all utility lines are. If you cannot determine locations on your own, local utility offices will help customers find their lines. Telephone and electricity lines should note whether they are underground or aboveground. Other major underground utilities are cable TV, natural gas, water and sanitary sewer. Noting the times of significant soil disturbance is very useful for tracking your trees' health. Note on your plan the date the house was built. If additions or new structures have been constructed or new underground utility lines laid, note the activity and the year.

Another useful documentation tool is to make systematic photographs of your property and your trees. Photograph so as to capture your trees from different views. Including a fixed sized object such as the house or storage building will help give you a sense of scale. Taking photographs every year or so and comparing the tree sizes to the fixed size objects will show you the rate of growth of your trees. Often when you want to track change in a tree condition, photographs are very useful comparison tools.

The checkup assumes you already have a property plan or some method of referencing various comments to the intended trees. If you do not, take time to do so before starting the checkup.

A tree checkup can be performed any time of the year, but some times of the year make certain observation easier than other times. Observations concerning leaves have to be done when the tree is in leaf. Observations of limbs and branches high in the tree are often easier when the leaves are not present.

Generally speaking, the best time of the year to perform a checkup is from mid-April to early October when the tree is in full leaf and, if deciduous, before it starts losing leaves in the fall.)

1. The Big Picture

If you have never thought about the general contributions of your trees to your property, take time to do so. Walk around your property and bring along this checkup guide, a copy of your property plan if you have prepared one, a pad and a pencil to make notes. Walk around

several times to get a feel for the general character of your landscape, rather than just taking a view from your routine day-to-day routes. Think though the seasons and picture the different areas as they are throughout the year. Photographs taken at different times of the year help.

If you do not have a lot of trees, you might go ahead and note the location of your trees on your property plan. Measurements taken relative to property lines and structures can be used to locate the trees on your scaled property plan. Accuracy within a few yards is generally easy to achieve and is sufficient for most needs. If you have numerous trees, the following set of questions will help identify trees that you will want to locate on the plan. As a question helps you identify a tree of note, locate it on the plan. If you give the tree a reference number, you can use the number to reference the notes you make to specific trees.

How do trees seem to contribute to the general character or major views of your landscape?

Are any areas more open than you would like? Are any dark and gloomy? Note these areas on the plan.

Which trees are visually most prominent and physically the largest?

Which trees shade areas that you like shaded. Which shade areas you don't want shaded?

Note all trees that make other significant positive contributions to your property such as defining the backyard, framing the house, being beautiful to you, providing a lower maintenance landscape option? Which trees make the most contributions?

Which trees cause problems for you or your neighbor or make some type of negative contribution?

Having answered these questions, you should have identified trees that are particularly notable to you for either good or bad reasons. If you update your property plan, before making notes on it you should make an extra copy for use in the future.

The next series of steps involve examining specific trees more closely. If you have checkup comments from the past, read over them and take them into consideration.

2. **General Health**

An important approach for non-professional to detect health problems in trees is to compare trees to each other and to compare parts of a tree to the tree overall. By comparing trees you can gain an eye for what is normal appearance and what is not. Comparing trees to other trees of its kind is best.

Assuming that a tree is in leaf, does the tree appear to be uniformly green and/or of a color much like other trees of its kind? Based on comparison to past size, how fast does the tree appear to be growing in width or height?

Vigorous trees display good leaf color. Vigorous trees also display a good rate of growth for a tree of its type. Large growing shade trees may grow a few feet in height when it is young. As it matures the rate of growth slows but generally you like to see more than 5 inches of shoot growth a year. **Using leaf color and growth, rate the tree as to very vigorous, normal vigor, fair vigor, poor vigor.**

Assuming that trees are in leaf, are any significantly sized trees bare of leaves and so apparently dead? Note that on the plan.

A dead tree will rapidly become structurally unstable. If the tree poses any risk of harming people or property should it fall or drop limbs, you should contact a tree professional as soon as possible to assess the situation. The longer you wait, the more the risk. Tree professionals often refuse to remove trees that have decayed to the point that they are risky to climb.

Assuming that trees are in leaf, are there any trees that have discolored or stunted leaves? Are there trees with limbs or branches that have sparse number of leaves compared to the rest of the tree or compared to other trees? Estimate the percentage of the tree with such leaves. Are there limbs or branches that are completely bare of leaves or are otherwise obviously dead? Estimate the percentage of the tree that looks dead. Record these conditions and percentages for future reference.

Discolored, stunted or sparse leaves are generally a sign of a health problem in either the effected limb or the tree in general. Often such limbs are in the process of dying. When more than 15% of the limbs and/or branches of a tree have such leaves or are outright dead, the tree warrants frequent future checkups and preferably, an examination by a certified tree professional. Presence of one or more large major limbs warrants the same monitoring. Periodic photographs will be very useful to assess rate of change in the tree's condition. Tree health is just like a human's, early detection and treatment of problems generally makes things much simpler, less costly and greatly increases the chance of full recovery. Even elaborate health restoring treatments by a tree professional may cost less than the removal of a large tree. It is recommended practice to periodically remove dead and dying limbs from trees that are valued or are near human activity areas.

When a tree suffers significant damage from natural causes or human construction activities, often branches and limbs of the tree will decline in health and perhaps die. This is called "dieback". The more the damage, the more the dieback. See the discussion about root damage in section 3. Tree Damage Issues.

Are there trees or portions of tree that when compared to other trees and have straight, perhaps numerous, sprout like shoots growing along the lower portions of limbs, branches or on the trunk? Are these sprouts growing below unhealthy or dead portions of limbs or branches?

When a tree or portion of a tree is damaged or becomes unhealthy, it may initiate what are called watersprouts. These watersprouts are a desperate reaction by the tree to put on new growth in order to overcome the damaged or unhealthy state. The more numerous the sprouts or the more they are associated with tree "dieback" described above, the more likely the watersprouts are a symptom of very poor general health in the tree. Occasionally water sprouts can arise for other reasons that are less serious. An assessment by a certified tree professional is recommended.

There are other indications of an unhealthy or dead state that are particularly useful when a tree is deciduous and out-of-leaf. Compare the appearance of the tree to other trees. **Are any of the following signs present: discoloration or a dry, shriveled look in twigs and branches; increased dropping of branches all of which are dead, clinging dead leaves when other trees of that type are bare; mushrooms growing on any portion of the tree?**

Mushrooms, large or small, growing directly on the base of the tree, trunk or large limbs can be an indication of advanced wood decay. The tree may be seriously unhealthy and structurally unstable. You should contact a tree professional promptly just as you would for a dead tree.

Do any trees have swollen or gnarled looking growths along the trunk or limbs?

Sometimes these unusual growths are not particularly harmful. If the growth appears to be growing in a uniform density and pattern along with the rest of the trunk or limb, it may be just bark closing over a dropped limb or a non-serious bur growth. If the growth extrudes sap or weeps at certain times, this may indicate a decay or infection problem. If the growth is preventing the tree trunk or limb from growing in a uniform cylindrical manner, it may be weakening the strength of the tree. If more than 30 percent of the circumference of the trunk or a major limb is affected, you should have a certified tree professional investigate the condition. Pines in particular are often infected by a fungus, called fusiform rust, which can cause growth that is weak.

Do any trees have a flattened or sunken, sometimes discolored areas on the trunk or large limbs? If so, does the tissue beneath the bark appear dead if you make a small slit with a knife?

If so, this may indicate infection by a canker organism. If the area is on a tree you value, you should consult with a certified tree professional to see if the tree is infected, if the infection is serious and if it can be treated. Canker can sometimes lead to extensive decay and even death of the tree.

Look at the smaller branches of larger trees or any branches on small trees. Do any have blackish or yellowish wilted looking stems or leaves?

This is a good indication of infection by some type of pest organisms. Simply removing the branch may remove the infection. Cut the branch back to a crotch a couple of feet below the affected area if possible. Disinfect the pruning tool with bleach between cuts. If the condition is widespread or the tree happens to be an elm, a more serious condition is possible. Contact a certified tree professional to assess the condition.

Do any trees show other significant symptoms of insect or disease damage? Note these.

Generally, small-scale damage or even an occasional large-scale outbreak of many pests is not serious in the long term. Often, these occurrences are very short in duration. Most insect pests and disease occurrences in trees are within tolerable limits and do not justify treatment. However, when you note a particular individual tree seems to be affected by insects or disease more frequently than other trees, this may be an indication of a general health problem with the tree. This observation is most useful when you can compare the tree to other trees of the same kind in the same area. Some types of trees are prone to certain insect and disease problems in general. The problem is not so much with the individual tree; rather it is a problem with the type of tree.

Examine the trunk and major limbs, are there numerous instances of hole boring by insects with sawdust coming out of the hole? This may indicate a serious health problem. Sometimes the insects are secondary pests to an earlier health problem. If the tree is large enough to be a safety concern or is very valuable, contacting a certified tree professional is advised. The boring of numerous but small shallow holes in the bark by a woodpecker is generally not a concern. If the holes are deeper and larger, it can be an indication that the bird is boring into soft decaying wood. This is a cause for greater concern and a tree professional might be contacted.

Scale insects are small insects with a scaly hard or soft covering. These insects move unnoticeably slow and can build up in layers on leaves and stems. A build up of a large

number of scale may indicate poor health of the tree. If scale seems to be an increasing problem on a tree, you should think about having it treated.

Currently one of the most significant tree insect pests in Cary is the southern pine beetle. Southern pine beetles often attacks a pine tree in sufficient numbers to kill the tree. The beetles are particularly attracted to unhealthy pines. Pines adjacent to construction areas are often damaged and unhealthy. The rapid rate of growth in the Cary area has resulted in lots of recent construction sites and unhealthy pines. Recent drought has also stressed pine trees. Unfortunately there is no currently registered chemical treatment for the beetle once it has attacked a tree. Preventive chemical treatments are available but the cost makes them impractical for all but the most highly valued pines. The most practical treatment for the insect is to keep pines healthy so that they do not attract beetles. For more on the southern pine beetle, visit the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service's site about the beetle; <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/O&T/trees/note82/note82.html>.

Few people ever notice the beginning of a southern pine beetle attack. The beetles are tiny at about 1/8 inch long. When the beetle attacks, it bores tiny holes in the trunk generally far above eye level. The beetle lays eggs in the tree and the resulting larvae feed under the bark. People tend not to notice any problem until the needles of the tree turn yellowish then reddish brown as the tree dies in 1-2 months time. Make frequent note of the color of your pines during the beetle breeding months from April to October. If you note certain trees becoming off-color or see beetle holes, it is recommended that you have the tree inspected by a certified tree professional as quickly as possible. If the professional thinks the attack is major, you should cut the tree down. If you cut the tree down early enough, the developing larvae are killed and you are helping prevent spread of new beetles. The tree would have had to be cut down eventually anyway.

3. Tree Damage Issues

Do any trees have cracks or splits in the trunk or large limbs? Do any trees have broken or damaged limbs or branches?

Sometimes severe winds will bend or twist tree parts to the point that they crack or break. Damage to the trunk and large limbs should be evaluated by a certified tree professional to assess the damage. The tree may be repairable, or it may need to be removed. Unrepaired cracks or splits can grow in severity and the tree poses an increased risk of falling or dropping large limbs.

Removing dead or damaged limbs and branches is always good practice. If a valued large tree has more than 20 percent dead or damaged limbs and branches, removal and evaluation by a certified tree professional is recommended. Removal of limbs and branches that pose safety concerns is recommended regardless of any percentage. Loose broken limbs and branches that are caught in the tree are often called "hangers". These have an increased chance of falling out of the tree unexpectedly.

Does the bark of any tree appear to be split, peeled or torn in a more or less straight line running up and down the tree?

If so, this may be a lightning strike wound. Trees sometimes survive lightning strikes quite well and other times they are killed outright. Strikes that result in splits of the bark and/or the inner wood may warrant treatment by a certified tree professional. Bark that is peeled off the trunk may need to be fastened back to the tree or stabilized so it does not continue to peel off

Do any trees have wounds on the trunk? Do the wounds look like they were caused by construction equipment?

The greater the number of wounds, the greater the chance that the wounds will significantly harm a tree's health. If wounds surround the tree for more than 1/3 the circumference of the tree, the tree has a high probability of developing decay problems or other serious health problems. You should consult with a certified tree professional if the tree is large enough to pose a safety concern or you value the tree highly.

Wounds by equipment can occur during a construction project. That is the reason putting up tree protection fencing during construction is a good idea.

Do any trees have wounds on the base of the tree? Do the wounds look like they were caused by construction equipment? By a lawnmower? By a string weed trimmer?

Large wounds to the base of a tree can lead to more complications than wounds to the trunk. The base of the tree and the surrounding buttress roots can decay once wounded. Often the base of the tree flares out and shows the beginning of the separate buttress roots. This area of the tree is very important to the ability of the tree to remain upright. Trees having large wounds comprising more than 1/4 the circumference of the tree, or wounds on more than 1/4 of the buttress roots should be evaluated by a certified tree professional.

Wounds that look like a lawn mower or string trimmer caused them are generally less damaging to larger trees but can be very damaging to small trees. Still, wounding should be always avoided. If the wounding is due to way the trees are being treated currently, stop the wounding. Mulching around trees keeps them away from mowers and trimmers.

Are the wounds developing new bark like tissue around the perimeter of the wound? Does the new tissue appear to be closing the wound?

If so, that is a good sign that the tree is "closing" the wound and may overcome the damage. Wound closing can hide continued decay beneath the new bark. If the amount of wounding passes the limits mentioned above, it is recommended to have the tree evaluated even the wounds are closing. This is especially true for wounds to the base of the tree.

Are there trees near a former construction area?

The closer a tree is to a construction site, the greater the chance that the tree was damaged by the construction. Roots of trees extend well away from the tree so roots are often damaged even if the tree trunk is not damaged at all. If the construction was very recent the tree may not have had time to show signs of damage such as loss of vigor, or dieback of sections of the crown. Often, trees that develop signs of being damaged quickly after adjacent construction are showing signs of major damage and may not survive the damage. Other trees may take many years for the impact of construction damage to fully show. Hopefully, a damaged tree will only display minor loss of vigor or dieback for a few years then appear to become healthier.

Large equipment wounding of the trunk or base is a sure sign that the roots of the tree have been damaged as well. Damage to the roots is difficult to measure because they are underground.

Many people think that tree roots grow deep into the ground. This is not true, particularly in regions with clay soils like ours. About 70 percent of the roots of even our largest trees are in the top 12 inches of soil. Most of the feeder roots are in the top 6 inches of soil so even shallow grading damages roots. Compaction of soil damages roots and makes it hard for new roots to grow.

Often professionals use a rule of thumb measure of extent of root damage or to decide a minimum amount of area to try to protect around a tree during construction. First they

measure the diameter of the tree in inches 4.5 feet above the ground. This is called diameter-breast-height or DBH for short. Then they measure a circle with typically one-foot radius for every inch diameter DBH. This circle is called the Critical Root Zone or CRZ. If more than 40 percent of the CRZ is damaged or lost, the tree is a good candidate for significant future problems. Some types of trees, such as oaks, are below average in tolerance to root damage. Some, such as maples and pines are more tolerant.

Do you any tree has had a large portion of its critical root zone damaged? If so, it may explain other health problems you are seeing in the tree. For all your valued trees near former construction sites, determine the amount of critical root zone damage and make note of it in your comments.

Do you have any trees that do not have the typical flared base like other trees of its kind? Examine the base and the surrounding area. Is it possible that soil has been brought into the area and is now burying the base of the tree?

Trees that have had their roots covered by soil often develop health problems. If the tree is already displaying health problems, the added soil is decreasing the amount of oxygen getting to the tree and the roots are suffocating. The more clay in the added soil or the deeper the soil, the greater the problem. It can be difficult or impractical to correct the problem. A recently developed technique of using an air gun to excavate buried roots might be very helpful. Contact a certified tree professional and ask about air gun root excavation.

Root excavation can also expose problems with roots that are encircling the trunk of the tree and causing a "girdling" effect that prevents healthy growth of the trunk. This can stunt or kill the tree. Girdling roots are more common in planted trees than in natural trees. Root excavation identifies girdling roots that can be severed, freeing the trunk.

Note if any unhealthy looking trees are near underground utility lines.

The installation of underground lines involves trenching. Cable TV lines are usually only a few inches deep and cause less damage. Sewer lines can be several feet or even yards deep. Installing the lines cuts tree roots. The closer to the tree, the more loss of roots. The critical root zone rule of thumb applies in these situations as well. Even shallow lines close to a tree can do major damage. If you having any new utility connections made or redoing old ones, you should investigate options that cause less damage to your more valued trees. Cable, telephone and electricity are easily rerouted. As early as possible, tell the utility that you want to discuss tree protection options with the installation manager. If you do not do so, the installation crews will generally take the shortest route. With cable TV it is an option to not have the line buried but you must sign a waiver. You can consider mulch, leaves or other means to hide the line in areas that are near trees. So long as the line is undamaged, TV reception is not effected in any way. If the line gets damaged, repair of cable TV line is easy.

Were you unable to locate all your underground utilities? Are there any trees with root damage symptoms even though the trees are not very close to construction areas? You may have located an uncharted utility line.

4. **Tree Structural Issues**

We have already mentioned some health problems where wood decay may be a problem. A tree may be seemingly to have overcome physical damages such as construction root damage, trunk and basal wounds or natural events like storm or lightning damage. The tree may be growing vigorously. However, the tree may have hidden flaws that result in the tree or part of it breaking or falling. Cracks may become weaker as the tree grows in weight, flexes the crack over time or decay sets in. The same is true for the stability of the trunk and the roots of the tree. This is the reason that an evaluation by a certified tree professional can

be so valuable.

Does any trees overhang a part of your or your neighbors' yards that people are in often? Do any overhang or lean towards your house or other valuable structures, including your neighbors'? Are any trees with possible health or structural problems tall enough to fall into these areas or onto these structures?

These are trees that you will especially want to monitor and possibly have evaluated by a certified tree professional. Leaning trees are not necessarily structurally unstable. In fact, most are stable and the lean in and of itself is no big concern. They may have been partially blown or bent over earlier in their life and have re-stabilized themselves very well.

Photographs of a leaning tree taken over time may show evidence of increased leaning. A certified tree professional should evaluate a tree that is changing in lean.

Look at the overall balance of the weight of the trunk, limbs and branches. Ideally there is a more or less balanced weight condition over the base of the tree. Do any trees seem to be way out of balance?

If so, these are trees that may be of greater concern should they have root, trunk or limb damages. If you have leaning trees, you may notice how the tree has compensated for the lean by growing more on the side away from the lean.

Is there is evidence that ground is bulging up on one side of the tree?

This may be a sign that the tree is starting to lean. The bulge is caused by the uplifting of the mass of tree roots and soil on the side of the tree opposite the lean. A tree professional should be consulted promptly if this type of bulging occurs. Such leaning happens more frequently during or shortly after excessively long wet spells and/or windstorms.

Does the tree have more than one trunk?

Having more than one trunk is normal for some types of trees. Preferably though, large growing trees will just have one main trunk. If the trunks are growing together tightly, they may develop a condition called "included bark". When the bark is included, the tissues of the two trunks are not fusing together. Often you can see a double ridge of bark extending down to the point where the two trunks separate. An obvious furrow or valley between the trunks may be evident. Included bark situations are not as strong structurally as normal tree crotches. Strong wooded trees like oaks generally don't have many problems even if bark is included. Weaker wooded trees like pines and maples are more prone to one or both of the trunks splitting off.

Are there any large limbs or branches where two are growing together tightly?

It is possible to have included bark in limbs and branches. Just as in trunks, the crotches are weaker than normal ones and may pose more risk of splitting off.

5. **Growing Conditions.**

Do you have turf beneath any trees? Are any of these trees young or not as healthy as they should be?

Turf competes with trees for nutrients and water. Chemicals emitted by some turf grass roots can stunt young trees and sick trees. Chemicals put on the turf to control weeds can harm trees. Broadleaf weed herbicides are especially harmful. The foot and mower traffic necessary to keep the turf mowed contributes to soil compaction that is not good for the tree.

A layer of mulch is the best way to treat the area around trees. Mulch improves the underlying soil, and protects the roots from heat and dryness. Two to four inches of leaves, bark, wood chips and pine straw are all good mulches. Stone and gravel can be used as mulches too in certain areas. Eliminating turf and mulching is highly recommended beneath young and unhealthy trees.

Is the area around any of your trees compacted and hard. Is the area bare?

If so, mulching is still one good treatment. If a tree is unhealthy and you want to try to reinvigorate it, you might also loosen compacted soil by using a lawn aerator. Do not come closer than several feet of the tree's base so that you do not hit large roots. Do not aerate near exposed large roots. Make sure the area has 2-4 inches of mulch. Having a tree professional use an air gun mentioned earlier can be a very effective way to correct compacted soil.

Compacted areas shed water quickly and the underlying soil may be drier than areas of looser soil. In such compacted areas, unhealthy trees that need reinvigorating may benefit from irrigation. You want to water very slowly so that the water sinks in, rather than runs off. When it has not rained and is not expected, watering to try equal an inch of water over the course of one to two days is sufficient to last the tree a week. Even if in an area of good soil, an unhealthy tree will benefit from watering during dry spells. Established healthy trees do not need to be watered except in unusually long droughts.

Sometimes people wonder whether fertilization will help unhealthy trees recover. It may, but improper or over-fertilization can make the condition even worse. Trees generally meet their basic needs on the nutrients already present in the soil. Mulching is an excellent way of fertilizing trees in a slow safe manner. Fertilizing lawns makes nutrients available to nearby trees as well. Do more reading on the subject or consult with a certified tree professional before you do a lot of tree fertilization.

6. Conflicts

Do you have trees close to the foundations of a structure, or paved areas? Do the foundations or paved areas appear to be cracked or heaved upward.

If so, the root of a nearby tree may be heaving the pavement or enlarging a small preexisting crack. This situation is often tolerable in paved areas. A tree heaving a foundation, particularly the foundation of a house or valuable structure, is generally not tolerable. You may have to have a professional do root pruning or even remove the tree.

If you have a young tree that is growing very close to foundations or paved areas, you should evaluate the importance of the tree compared to possible damage it may cause. Removing young trees is easy. If you need more trees, plant them at least five feet away from paved areas and ten feet away from foundations.

Do you have tree branches touching overhead power or telephone lines?

Notify your utility company and ask them if they will prune the branches. NEVER PRUNE BRANCHES NEAR POWER LINES ON YOUR OWN ! THIS IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS DUE TO RISK OF DEATH OR SEVERE INJURY BY ELECTROCUTION...Only skilled professionals should do this.

Do you have trees that have large dead, dying or damaged branches that overhang

your overhead power or telephone lines?

Again, call your utility and ask them if they will prune the branches. **DO NOT PRUNE THEM YOURSELF!**

Do you have young trees growing near underground utility lines, electrical transformers, fire hydrants, public sidewalks or streets, street or area light poles? Do you have young trees growing beneath overhead utility lines?

If so, strongly consider removing the tree to prevent future conflicts. Utility personnel need good access to these items. Clearance of ten feet from transformers, fire hydrants, streets and light poles is desired. Side clearance of fifteen feet from overhead lines is desired. Five feet clearance from sidewalks is desired.

If you need to plant trees, plant them so as to provide these minimum clearances.

Do any of your trees cause a neighbor's property any of the problems discussed in this tree checkup? Does a neighbor have a tree that is causing any of the problems to your property?

If your tree causes a problem, be a good neighbor and evaluate the situation from his or her perspective. Remember, you may be protecting someone else's property or safety. Also remember, you may be legally liable for damages caused by your tree.

If their tree is causing the problem, use this checkup guide to help discuss the problem with them. The neutral opinion of a certified tree professional will be very valuable in determining what is the appropriate action.