

Digging Deep

Care For Your Trees and They Will Care for You

By Cynthia Brian

“Trees are poems the earth writes upon the sky” — Kahlil Gibran



The ivy growing up the cottonwood and the shaggy palms.

It was a glorious sunny day, almost mocking the tragedy that was to come. As my grandfather mowed his lawn — something he'd done many times before — the limb of a diseased elm tree came crashing down on him. He was killed instantly.

I write this week's article as a cautionary tale. My grandfather knew the tree was diseased, but the city he lived in had not yet issued the permits needed to remove it. With this tragedy always in my heart, I am forever diligent in inspecting my trees.

Trees are the life source of our world, offering so much for so little. Trees clean our air, provide shade, offer oxygen, filter runoff drainage, and cool the air. Without trees, many species of birds, squirrels, bees, and other wildlife would not have habitat. Trees beautify a neighborhood, conserve energy in our homes, bear fruit and offer climbing structures for adventurous children. Trees are harvested to make furniture, paper products, and firewood. Sitting next to a tree recalibrates our bodily energy. Property values are higher in residential areas with mature trees. Trees are indeed poems written in the sky.



Using a bucket to cut down the cottonwood tree. Photos Cynthia Brian

This past year moss began to form on the branches of the gigantic cottonwood tree that had voluntarily seeded itself in my front yard. Over the winter, mistletoe dangled from the heights, ivy strangled the trunk, and giant ugly mushrooms sprouted along the base. While other trees on the property had leaves unfurling when the vernal equinox approached, my cottonwood remained haunted.

Over the years, Advance Tree Service had delivered free wood chips to my property as mulch for my garden. It was time to call the arborist cavalry there. Owner and President Darren Edwards confirmed that the tree was dead and needed prompt removal. He offered a reasonable bid and we set up a time for his crew to prune my palm fronds and cut down the dead cottonwood. I used the occasion to find out more about the company, proper tree care and how to spot trouble.

Growing up in Moraga, Edwards was nicknamed “Dedwards”, AKA “Dead Wood” in junior high. The name would prove prophetic. In 1987 he began working for a tree care company and realized he loved everything about the work: being outdoors in nature, climbing trees, meet-

ing people and taking care of the environment. By 1991 he had started his own business with a single pick-up truck and climbing gear. His entrepreneurial father, Lew, realized how much Edwards enjoyed what he was doing and partnered with him in 1994 to form the official Advance Tree Service, Inc. It became a family affair with his mom, Fay, and two sisters, Lorie and Lisa, also involved.

Both father and son went back to school to become certified arborists so that they would have the professional knowledge necessary to understand the internal biology, growth habits, pests, diseases, and best pruning and removal practices.

Edwards indicated that by the end of April deciduous trees have leafed out and should be looking fresh and healthy. Because of our California drought, many trees have suffered injury. Many have died, are dying or are extremely stressed. It's time to take a walk around your property to inspect your trees and larger shrubs. Check for dead, dry, brittle branches and holes in the bark or trunk. If you have a suspicion that a tree may be impaired, it's critical to contact a certified arborist who will be able to identify hazards and offer advice. If your tree needs a treatment or removal, they will help identify your options.

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Free wood chips and firewood are offered to customers.