

## **Trees and Utility Wires Do Not Mix**

A common problem that I see throughout Clarksville is trees being planted too close to utility wires. As I write this column, I am looking at oak trees, which mature at over 70', planted directly under an overhead utility. This has negative effects for the homeowner and for utility providers. Homeowners are upset when they come home and find that their trees have been pruned by the utility service. The problem for the utility provider is that they have to spend additional funds to clear lines to provide uninterrupted service to their customers.

When planting new trees into the landscape, homeowners and businesses need to exercise caution when planting near utility lines. Proper tree selection and placement should be the foremost thought. By planting the right tree in the right place, future conflicts between trees and utilities can be avoided.

Whenever possible, trees should not be planted under or near overhead utilities. If this must be done, select trees that will not grow to be taller than 20' at maturity. This will help alleviate any major pruning having to be performed by utility providers. However, you should still try to stay 20' away from these utilities when planting small maturing trees. A great alternative to planting trees under utility lines is to

use large shrubs and grasses. There is a great variety to choose from, and problems can be completely avoided in the future.

If you wish to plant a tree that will mature to be greater than 20' tall, there are a few guidelines you should follow. If you want to plant a medium sized species, plant a minimum of 40' away from overhead utilities. For large tree species, stay a minimum of 60' away. It is a pretty simple rule of thumb, but one many of us still disregard. We need to be more vigilant in upholding these practices.

When these guidelines are followed, most utility pruning should be avoided in the future. But do not be surprised if some minor pruning is still needed to establish the minimum clearance that the utility needs.

Although it upsets all of us when we come home and see that our trees have been pruned, we cannot put all of the blame on the utility companies. It is our responsibility to use forethought before planting trees, and understand the consequences if we plant too close to utility lines. Utility providers must keep lines clear, by using professional techniques, so that they can deliver the services that we all enjoy. Just remember, think before you plant, and plant the right tree in the right spot

## Large Shrubs for Utility Areas

### **Common Name**

Bottlebrush Buckeye  
Butterfly Bush  
American Fringetree  
Smokebush  
Witchhazel  
Tree Hydrangeas

### **Scientific Name**

*Aesculus parviflora*  
*Buddleia sp.*  
*Chionanthus virginicus*  
*Cotinus coggygria*  
*Hammelis sp.*  
*Hydrangea sp.*

**Common Name**

Holly  
Sumac  
Lilac  
Blackhaw Viburnum

**Scientific Name**

*Ilex sp.*  
*Rhus sp.*  
*Syringa sp.*  
*Viburnum rufidulum/prunifolium*

Small Trees for Utility Areas

Japanese Maple  
Serviceberry  
Redbud  
Flowering Dogwood  
Kousa Dogwood  
Corneliancherry Dogwood  
Hawthorn  
Goldenraintree  
Crape Myrtle  
Bush Magnolias  
Crabapple (disease resistant varieties)  
Tree Lilac

*Acer palmatum*  
*Amelanchier sp.*  
*Cercis canadensis*  
*Cornus florida*  
*Cornus kousa*  
*Cornus mas*  
*Crataegus sp.*  
*Koelreuteria paniculata*  
*Lagerstroemia sp.*  
*Magnolia sp.*  
*Malus sp.*  
*Syringa pekinensis/reticulata*