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Treat Wounds to Prevent Decay
Michigan State University
Cooperative Extension Service
Northeastern Forest Experimental Station, USDA Forest Service
January 1977
2 pages

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HOW TO

TREAT WOUNDS TO PREVENT DECAY

Extension Bulletin E-1075
Nat. Resources Series, Jan. '77

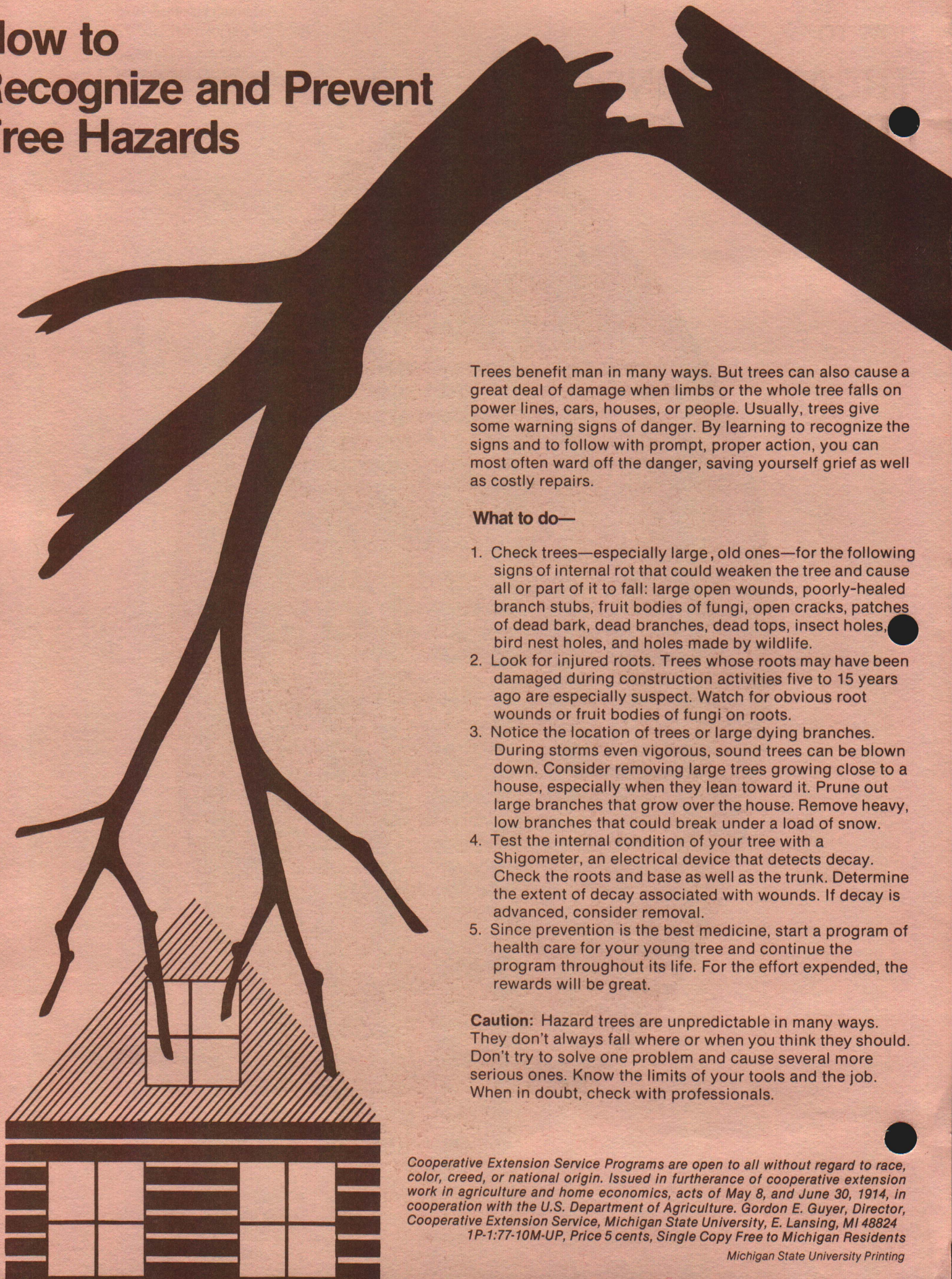
Cooperative Extension Service
Michigan State University

DECAY is a major cause of damage to trees. WOUNDS start the processes that can lead to decay. Decayed trees are unsightly, hazardous, and low quality. To prevent decay, first prevent wounds, but if a tree becomes wounded follow these steps to minimize decay, and to help the tree remain healthy.

1. Clean wounds; trim away loose injured bark.
2. Shape the wound into a vertical oval when possible. Use a sharp knife to make a clean edge between vigorous bark and exposed wood.
3. Remove dead, dying or weak branches from the wounded tree.
4. Water and properly fertilize the tree.
5. Remove dead wood from around tree — practice sanitation.
6. Remove less valuable woody plants that may be crowding the valuable wounded tree.
7. Protect the tree from further injury.
8. Use a thin coat of a wound dressing only if it's needed as a sign that the wound has been treated. Otherwise do not paint the wound.

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Northeastern Forest
Experiment Station
USDA Forest Service
Upper Darby, Pa. 19082

How to Recognize and Prevent Tree Hazards



Trees benefit man in many ways. But trees can also cause a great deal of damage when limbs or the whole tree falls on power lines, cars, houses, or people. Usually, trees give some warning signs of danger. By learning to recognize the signs and to follow with prompt, proper action, you can most often ward off the danger, saving yourself grief as well as costly repairs.

What to do—

1. Check trees—especially large, old ones—for the following signs of internal rot that could weaken the tree and cause all or part of it to fall: large open wounds, poorly-healed branch stubs, fruit bodies of fungi, open cracks, patches of dead bark, dead branches, dead tops, insect holes, bird nest holes, and holes made by wildlife.
2. Look for injured roots. Trees whose roots may have been damaged during construction activities five to 15 years ago are especially suspect. Watch for obvious root wounds or fruit bodies of fungi on roots.
3. Notice the location of trees or large dying branches. During storms even vigorous, sound trees can be blown down. Consider removing large trees growing close to a house, especially when they lean toward it. Prune out large branches that grow over the house. Remove heavy, low branches that could break under a load of snow.
4. Test the internal condition of your tree with a Shigometer, an electrical device that detects decay. Check the roots and base as well as the trunk. Determine the extent of decay associated with wounds. If decay is advanced, consider removal.
5. Since prevention is the best medicine, start a program of health care for your young tree and continue the program throughout its life. For the effort expended, the rewards will be great.

Caution: Hazard trees are unpredictable in many ways. They don't always fall where or when you think they should. Don't try to solve one problem and cause several more serious ones. Know the limits of your tools and the job. When in doubt, check with professionals.

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1P-1:77-10M-UP, Price 5 cents, Single Copy Free to Michigan Residents

Michigan State University Printing