

COUNCIL TENANTS

Trees that are in **YOUR GARDEN**

If you are a council tenant and have a tree **in your garden** that you think is **Dead, Dying, Dangerous** or the tree is causing direct damage to your property, please contact us immediately on **0121 464 8728**, or use the following link **www.birmingham.gov.uk/trees**

The following information is a guide to assist you in identifying a tree that may be within the above Health and Safety categories of Dead, Dying or Dangerous.

The Conditions of Tenancy advise that it is the tenant's responsibility to maintain this tree. Advice and guidance on how to maintain your garden is available from **birmingham.gov.uk/housing**

See below for guidance on when it is appropriate to report a tree related enquiry. A simple glossary of terms can be found at the end of this leaflet.

When YOU SHOULD contact us:

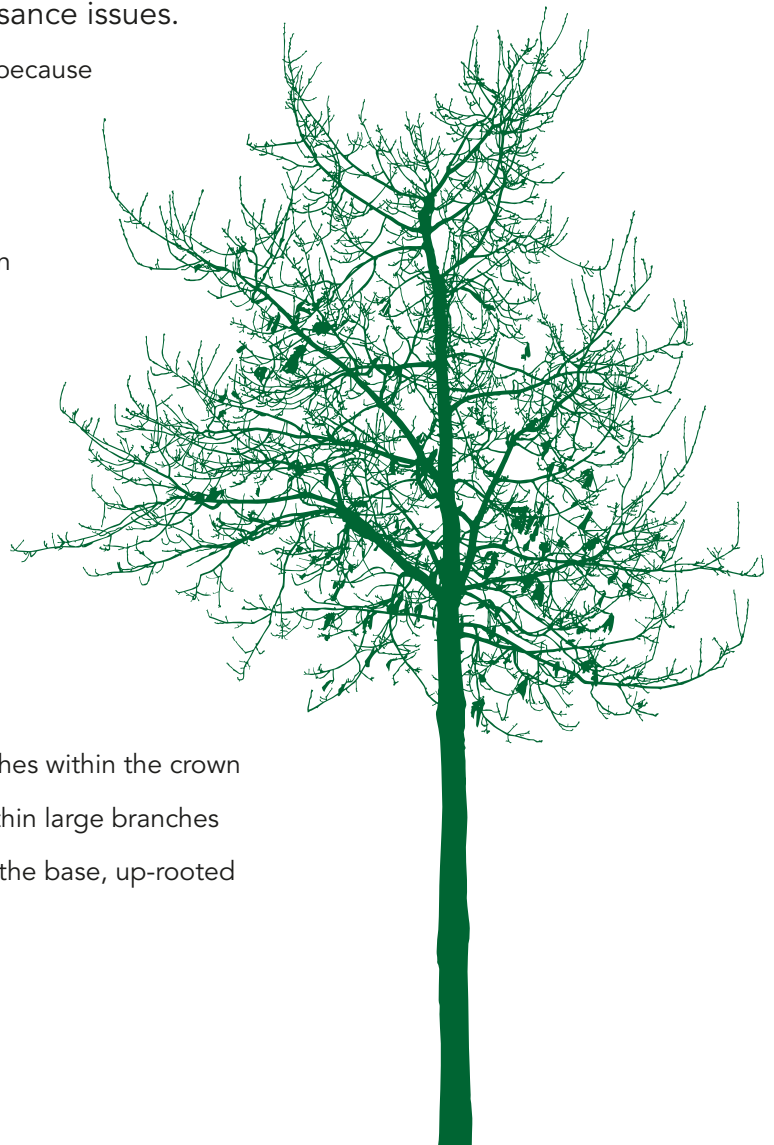
- Dead, Dying or Dangerous Trees
- Tree causing direct damage through physical contact with a property e.g. branches in contact with roof

When YOU SHOULD NOT contact us: Nuisance issues.

- Large or tall trees - we do not prune or fell trees because trees are large, tall or move naturally in the wind.
- Trees blocking light and general pruning
- Fallen leaves, seeds, pollen, nuts or fruit
- Neighbouring trees overhanging into your garden (unless dangerous or damaging your property)
- Poor TV reception
- Blocked guttering
- Bird Mess
- Insect activity/sap
- Removal of garden waste

A tree may be considered unsafe for the following reasons:

- It is dead
- Major deadwood, large broken or hanging branches within the crown
- Significant cracks or splints within the trunk or within large branches
- Recently leaning tree, Instability due to failure at the base, up-rooted
- Crown die-back
- Significant cavities
- Significant decay due to fungal infection.



The following pages will identify defects that should be reported by you to Birmingham City Council.

DEADWOOD/BROKEN BRANCHES WITHIN THE TREES CROWN

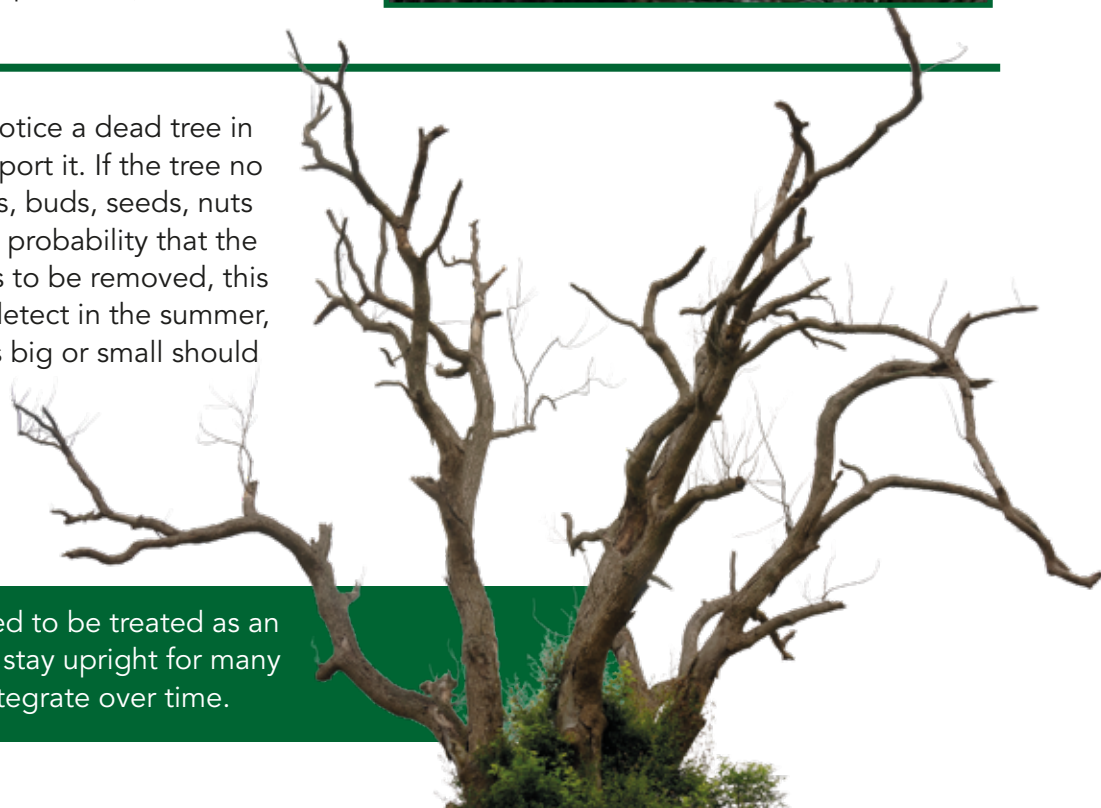
- If you notice large dead branches within the crown of your garden tree, please report it. It's perfectly normal for trees to have a small twigs and branches that are dead within the crown. These do not require any action. This is a natural occurrence in many tree species. Where possible, this should be retained as a valuable natural habitat resource. Some tree species can retain this deadwood for many years without risk to people or property.

We only remove large pieces of deadwood that could cause damage or injury from the crown of trees, and it is only removed if it poses an unreasonable risk or danger to people or property i.e. large dead branches overhanging footpaths, highways or areas of high use.

Broken/snapped or hanging branches as indicated in the photograph below that pose a danger to persons or property should be reported and will be inspected by a Tree Officer.



DEAD TREE – If you notice a dead tree in your garden, please report it. If the tree no longer produces leaves, buds, seeds, nuts or fruit. There is a high probability that the tree is dead and needs to be removed, this is particularly easy to detect in the summer, when all healthy plants big or small should be in leaf.



Not all dead trees need to be treated as an emergency. Many will stay upright for many years and slowly disintegrate over time.



CRACKS AND SPLITS - If you notice an **open** vertical crack running through one of the forks in your garden tree, like the photographs shown, please report it.

This is a relatively uncommon tree defect the majority of tree forks being perfectly safe. A split or crack in tree bark alone, should not be a cause for alarm. The bark can actually split on some fast and vigorously growing tree species; this is normal and no cause for concern. Only report this if you can clearly see a separation of wood, similar to the photographs below.

'**Included Bark**' is more commonly found in the following trees: **Norway Maple, Cedar, London Plane** and **Narrow-leaved Ash**.



Hazard Beam - please report any open cracks like this one, in large branches.



Leaning Tree – When is a leaning tree dangerous? – Generally, if the tree has always been leaning, it has adapted successfully to its environment and is safe.

However, if the ground around the base of the tree has lifted, moved, or if the tree's subsidence/lean is recent, please report it to Birmingham City Council.

Trees lean to optimise the amount of sunlight available to them. Just because it is leaning does not mean it is dangerous!

Trees are incredibly sophisticated organisms, capable of adapting their growth pattern. They can also detect and strengthen areas of weakness, to prevent them toppling over. This is a clever self-optimising process.



Leaning Conifer trees such as Pine will attempt to adapt to their environment by adding reaction wood on the compression side of the trunk in an attempt to push themselves upright.



The crown of this tree is growing upright, adapting its growth pattern to counterbalance the leaning trunk.

Leaning broadleaf trees such as Oak will attempt to adapt to their environment by adding reaction wood on the tension side of the trunk in an attempt to pull themselves upright.



Wind-thrown Trees

– Whilst the majority of trees are perfectly safe and capable of enduring/adapting to all of the changing weather conditions we experience in the UK. On rare occasions trees can get blown over. Wind speed, wind direction, tree condition and ground conditions can influence the potential for a tree to fail at the base. If you have a wind thrown tree, then contact Birmingham City Council.



**Just because it's tall,
large or moves naturally
in the wind, does not
mean it's dangerous!**

Large Trees, Tall Trees, Trees moving in the wind!

– The very small risk associated with tree failure can be mitigated by reporting significant defects.

Trees have had millions of years to adapt to gravity, climatic conditions such as wind, snow or rain and the ever-changing environment.

A healthy tree can survive for hundreds of years, providing numerous benefits to all of us.

The benefits of **trees**

- Aesthetic value
- Wildlife habitat
- Shelter from prevailing winds
- Reduce pollution in the atmosphere
- Provide shade
- Reduce noise
- Provide screening/
security/softening
- Provide recreation areas
- Stabilise soil/
reduce erosion
- Traffic calming
- Increase house prices
- Remove toxins from soil
- Improve health
and wellbeing
- Provide educational
environment
- Fruit/nuts
- Timber value/biomass





Example of Crown Die-Back

Crown Die-Back - We sometimes call very old trees **'Veterans'**. When they become very old and large, they have a clever survival strategy. They make themselves smaller.

Why? Because a smaller tree requires less resource and energy to maintain a healthy balance.

How? By gradually dying back and thus becoming smaller.

Veteran trees are a vital source of habitat.

Caused by:

- Fungal root decay
- Soil compaction around the root area/change in soil levels around the root area
- Prolonged water logging around the root area
- Root damage or excessive root removal
- Very old tree going into decline 'Veteran Tree'

If you notice a tree with enough crown die back to cause injury or damage should it fall, please contact us immediately on **0121 464 8728**, or use the following link **birmingham.gov.uk/trees**



Cavity, structural wood has decayed leaving a hollow void

Cavities - If you have a tree with a significant cavity, please report it.

Any wound made to a tree has the potential to decay and eventually become a cavity. A large cavity will need further investigation to assess the structural integrity of any remaining wood.

Caused by:

- Fungi
- Fire
- Lightning
- Animal/insect
- Unskilled tree worker
- Storm damage
- Vandalism/mechanical damage

The photographs below show very common 'Bark Wounds' which **do not need to be reported**

These can occur for many reasons, including vandalism, animal, strimmer or mower damage, branch removal etc. In time, these wounds will heal over. These are not cavities, as the wood is not decayed or hollow.



A brief introduction into tree Fungi

– If you see a fungal bracket on a tree please report it. The tree can then be assessed by a Tree Officer.

Some fungi are completely harmless and can be beneficial to the tree. However, there are types that can increase the risks associated with tree failure.

What do they do to the tree?

They can degrade the structural integrity of the tree by attacking the Lignin and or the Cellulose within the tree.

Lignin and Cellulose – are the main ingredients within and around the cell walls. Put simply, the building blocks within the tree.

Decay Types:

White Rot - Attacks Lignin causing a soft ductile fracture.



Decay Types:

Brown Rot - Attacks Cellulose causing a brittle fracture.



Simultaneous White Rot - Attacks both Lignin and Cellulose.



This is not a conclusive list of tree fungi but a select few that may impact the structural integrity of a tree.

Meripilus giganteus - White Rot, found primarily on Beech, Oak and London Plane. Likely to render the tree unsafe.



Ganoderma sp. - White Rot, found primarily on Oak and Beech. Likely to render the tree unsafe.



Kretzschmaria deusta – Soft Rot - Simultaneous White Rot, found primarily on Beech, Lime, Horse Chestnut and Sycamore (Maple) Likely to render the tree unsafe.



Sparassis crispa - Brown Rot, primarily found on Pine, Fir, Larch and Spruce. Likely to render the tree unsafe.



Piptoporus betulinus - Brown Rot, found on Silver Birch. May cause branch or stem failure.



Fomes fomentarius - Simultaneous White Rot, primarily found on Beech, Poplar and Birch. May cause branch or stem failure.



Armillaria sp. – White Rot, found on many broadleaf trees. May render the tree unsafe.



Inonotus hispidus - White Rot, primarily found on Ash and Apple. May cause stem or branch failure.



Inonotus dryadeus - White Rot, primarily found on Oak. May render the tree unsafe.



Old fruiting body of **Inonotus hispidus**



So how and why do trees become infected by Fungal Disease?

- Decay pathogens can enter through a wound.
- Decay pathogens can be dormant within a tree and only become active when the tree is under stress i.e. drought, water logging, root compaction.
- Decay pathogens can be transferred from tree to tree via animal, insect or man.
- Decay pathogens can sometimes kill a healthy tree, not wounded or under stress.

Can a tree defend itself from Fungal Decay?.....sort of yes!

A well maintained, healthy/vigorous tree is more resilient and better equipped to defend against decay pathogens. (Fungi) and the tree has a very clever trick up its sleeve called **CODIT 'Compartmentalisation of Decay in Trees'**



When wounded, the tree attempts to seal off the area of damage to prevent the spread of decay.

It boxes off the damage by using substances within the tree to prevent the decay from spreading.

These substances are used to form walls around the wounded area, they include: -

Resins, tannins, gums and even tiny air bubbles!



CODIT does work.

Eventually this pruning wound will completely heal over.

Glossary of Terms

Cavity – void or hollow within a tree, normally associated with fungal decay

Counterbalance – a trees ability to adjust its growth pattern in order to remain stable and safe

Crown – branch structure forming above the tree trunk

Decay – degraded wood, normally associated with fungal disease

Defect – potential fault or tree hazard which needs further investigation by a Tree Officer

Major Deadwood – dead branch of a size which poses an unreasonable risk to persons or property.

Root Zone – area of soil occupied by tree roots.

Stress/Weakness – caused by a tree defect or environmental factors such as drought or flooding.

Tree fork – a joining of wood to create roughly equal diameter branches.

Trunk – the main woody stem of a tree from which branches grow to form the crown.