

Tree Safety

(article compiled by David Stahl, Chair of the Safety & Awareness Committee)

This article is based on a report from the Architectural Control Committee (ACC) given by Chair Ed English at the October 2nd (2013) Board of Trustees meeting. After reporting several instances of trees being taken down for safety reasons which included a number of 80 to 100 foot madronas that were dying, Ed's report included the following analysis.

The ACC is seeing a large number of trees that have grown to the point of being unstable. The shallow rooted conifers, coupled with moist soil and found standing alone begin to sway and, subsequently, weaken their root systems. Recently, an arborist commented that many of these trees are second growth from the earlier logging of the Bell Hill, and grew out of buried piles of debris left over from the logging. In addition, construction of homes has affected the root systems through compaction by heavy equipment and diversion of water around dwellings. Finally, the introduction of landscaping has introduced additional water.

To the above, Ed remarked that there are early warning signs that tell you that you have a tree in trouble: (1) madronas trees that begin dying – most likely due to too much water, and (2) you start to hear a tree creaking which happens when it sways outside of its normal range – it is a sign of an unstable root system.

Dying madrona on Ravens Ridge



Highland Hills.

Ed then provided guidance in the case that homeowners are concerned about trees on their property.

They should have a reputable arborist or tree service look at them. If they are advised to remove them, the ACC will work with them to assure quick approval. Each member of the ACC has authority to approve a removal on the spot when tree health and safety are issues. ACC members are: Larry Elliott, Ed English, Gary Huff, Jim Jones, and Felix Nidzgorski.

Ed concluded his remarks by saying that we have **two** problems: unstable trees and trees packed in too tightly on undeveloped lots. This second problem is a fire hazard per Ed's subsequent conversation with Jim Barnfather. Observers among us would likely add that tree density is also a problem on some developed lots, the Greenbelt, and in communities that border

*Densely packed trees
on Fox Hollow*



On the matter of our risk for a forest fire, Jim Barnfather previously wrote a two part article (*Think We're Safe*) for the *Highlander* which can now be found on the HHMC website in the Safety & Awareness area under 'Fire Safety'. Readers of this Tree Safety article are urged to re-familiarize themselves with Jim's well-researched analysis.

In addition to the guidelines offered in Jim's article, the following are also appropriate in mitigating fire danger:

- Remove dead and dying trees (or at least top the dying tree). Note: topping trees by more than 1/3rd of their height often kills them, regardless of their root structure. I did have one success in topping a dying red cedar down to less than 12 feet – eight years later, the tree now looks like a very large bush and the water retention abilities of its root system were not sacrificed.
- Don't let slash (yard waste) accumulate on your property – one option is to haul it to Cascade Bark where it costs but \$4.00 to dispose a van full. Or you can use Lazy J Tree Farm (\$5/load).
- Observe and obey the annual 'Burn Ban'.
- Mow areas of high weeds annually – for sure by July 1st of each year.

