

FREE REPORT

Am I Safe From My Trees?

**Secrets of a Certified Arborist Revealed
In this **Tree Risk Inspection** Report**

INDEX:

1.0.....
..... Opening	
1.01.....
..... Introduction	
2.0.....
..... DIY Tree Risk Inspection	
2.01.....
..... Safety First	
2.02.....
..... Root System	
2.03.....
..... Heavy Lean	
2.04.....
..... Root Flare	
2.05.....
..... Tree Trunk	

2.06.....
..... **Branch Attachment**
2.07.....
..... **Dead Limbs**
2.08.....
..... **Widow Makers**
2.09.....
..... **Sprout Limbs**
2.10.....
..... **Cracks**
2.11.....
..... **Wounds**
2.12.....
..... **Nesting Holes**
2.13.....
..... **Sharp Bends**
2.14.....
..... **Leveraging Forces**
2.15.....
..... **Neighbors Trees**
3.0.....
..... **What Next**

1.0 - OPENING:

Are you worried about your trees but you're not positive which ones to worry about? Maybe there's no need to worry at all? Oh my! What should you do!?!

Don't worry, it's normal to wonder and worry about trees, but this report should help clarify if you need to worry. You can expect the report will educate you to perform basic visual tree risk inspection. This report can be used in your own yard to make educated decisions about your trees and help to decide when it is time to call a licensed certified arborist for further assessment and planning.

These are my secrets, developed over the course of my career, shared openly with you!

1.01 - INTRODUCTION:

I'm Certified Arborist Mike Cross and I have made it my mission to Protect People, Property & Trees – and in that specific order I vow to do so.

Clearly people are irreplaceable and must be protected first priority. Property that people spend hard earned money on must also be protected. For these reasons bad trees with targets must go. But you see - as an arborist I am a tree lover. I respect the trees and value their life cycles.

That's right trees are much like people with a life cycle and that is a big part of what draws my undivided attention to this industry. Over the years I have accomplished many achievements in the Tree Care Industry. Certified Arborist, Certified Tree Worker/Climber Specialist, Certified Treecare Safety Professional, Qualified Tree Risk Assessor, 2015 Florida State Tree Climbing Champion, and many other smaller credentials of study.

These accomplishments have all been driven by the need to understand WHY DO TREES FAIL & FALL?

Over the years of my career it becomes evident that tree situations never have one right answer. There is almost always a good side and a bad side to every decision made about trees.

On the other hand, it's pretty cut and dry that every time I see fallen trees or broken limbs, they have decay in the area of the break. Although tornadoes or category 4 hurricanes may non-discriminately break trees - but under normal storm environments trees break where there is decay.

It is our job to assist tree owners with tree risk inspection and coach the clients to make educated decisions about their own trees. Why depend on some tree guy telling you what to cut down???

So, to carry out the mission of Protecting People, Property & Trees, we help identify trees that have weak areas or areas of decay and that have a target they could potentially hit, then make educated decisions on how to handle that risk.

This all starts with tree risk inspection. You can perform basic visual tree risk inspection in your own yard to determine if you need to call a professional.

Here is how...

2.0 - DIY TREE RISK INSPECTION:

First things first... Identify trees that have a target. That simply means will the tree hit something if it falls either whole or partially? Targets include, people, houses, swimming pools, children play areas, driveway or parking areas, neighbor's houses, the street, power lines and many other things can be considered a target.

Those are the trees you want to inspect first priority but, like most of us in Tallahassee you are probably surrounded by trees and they could all hit your house, so in that case do something systematic. For example, I like to start in the front yard near the front door because that is usually where I am when the client greets me at the door but it's also where we are when the crew comes back to start the tree job. Work your way around the house or property moving in the same direction instead of zig zagging back and forth across the property because that will make the inspection flow much better without missing trees, especially if you are writing a report about the findings. Start at one point, circle the property and finish again at your starting point works well.

Mark the questionable trees with ribbon, string, paint or duct tape and make a note of it as you go.

So pick the nearest tree and start the individual inspection of every tree that has a target and once again... do it systematically the same every time and always start from the ground up...

ALWAYS!

Did I say always do it systematically and always do it from the ground up!?!?!?!?!?!?

If the tree is bad at the bottom then why analyze the rest of it?

2.01 - SAFETY FIRST: Before stepping under any tree canopy perform a quick visual assessment to make sure there are no obvious loose hanging tree limbs overhead or any large dead limbs that could fall at any moment. When determined to be safe to step under the canopy then start with your inspection of the root system.

2.02 - ROOT SYSTEM: Think about is the tree stable from the ground up? What holds the tree up? The roots, that's right! So, inspect the ground around the tree looking for changes to the root

zone area. Have you ever heard of the drip line? That is essentially where the tree canopy extends the furthest outward where if water was “dripping” it would give you a generic visual of the tree root system. If that root system area inside the drip line is tampered with, for example, trenching, raising or lowering of the ground or ground compaction, then the tree could be completely compromised. If the tree is in a low area where the root system stays wet, then fungal root rot can set in. Is the tree rooted up against a larger tree or some type of impediment that has kept it from developing an even root system all the way around it? Is there a heave in the ground where the root system is trying to pull up? Consult with a licensed certified arborist about these issues to discuss options.

2.03 - HEAVY LEAN: While inspecting the root system go ahead and look up to assess if the tree has a lean or bend. Assess weight of limbs. Are the limbs one sided? Is there a heave in the ground where roots are trying to pull up on the backside of the lean? A good indicator of a tree that is uprooting is that it has a straight trunk but is leaning. A tree that appears to be leaning but has a bend in the trunk is usually just bending for the sunlight over the years. The leaning issue is of concern but the bending issue usually not as much of a big deal unless the root system soil is saturated. If unsure then call a licensed arborist.

2.04 - ROOT FLARE: If the root system or protected root zone is intact, untampered with and appears normal the next thing to inspect is the root flare. That is the reaction wood around the base of the tree growing wider as a reaction to forces applied by the wind and gravity. The tree is building a wider stronger stance. Trees should have a visible flare outward at ground level. If that is missing, start digging. Look to see if the flare is buried under soil that was brought in or if runoff erosion is building up or possibly volcano mulching causing the root flare to be buried. If there is no flare – be aware! Call a licensed certified arborist.

2.05 - TREE TRUNK: Inspect the lower main tree trunk moving from the root flare or buttress of the tree up the main trunk. Be looking for clues such as cavities or hollows. Is the trunk oozing or discolored? Look to see if there is any scar tissue growth around the base known as wound wood. Are any mushrooms present which always indicates that there is decay present. Are there any cracks in the tree trunk? Is the bark intact or falling off? Does the tree trunk have a taper meaning does it get smaller in diameter from the ground up, or from the base of the tree stems to the outer ends does it taper down in diameter? Good trunk taper makes for stronger trees. No trunk taper can be a red flag. Make sure the trunk only has one main trunk and if it has more than one how do the attachment points look between the trunks?

2.06 - BRANCH ATTACHEMENTS: Moving up the main trunk you start seeing either limbs off the side of the trunk or the trunk can also actually have more than one main trunk which is known as co-dominant trunks meaning more than one main trunk fighting for dominance with each other. Either way check all attachment points between tree parts whether it be between codominant trunks or limb to trunk attachment points. A weak union or branch attachment occurs when two or more similarly sized branches grow so closely together that bark grows between the branches inside the union of attachment creating “included bark.” A generic way to describe this idea is that a “V” shape connection is bad. A “U” shape is best. This is more easily explained face to face but if there is a “V” shape between the two tree parts it means there is a bad attachment that is known to be weak and limited on time before it breaks. A “U” shape is

typically desired because that means that the tree formed a normal branch to trunk attachment with overlapping wood fibers making a much stronger locking system than a “V” shape with Included Bark. There can be options for these situations so consult with a qualified certified arborist.

2.07 - DEAD LIMBS: At this point your focus has moved from the lower part of the tree to the mid canopy which tends to be where dead limbs accumulate. Don’t worry, these lower dead limbs are not always cause for concern. It is relatively normal for lower limbs to break off leaving dead limbs. The lower limbs are the older limbs and they gain length, weight, and age meaning decay has had more time to set in. So, trees break at decayed areas and when limbs rub together like lower limbs do to each other they tend to break off. These lower limbs also tend to not get as much sunlight in a canopy interior or a wooded environment so all of these strikes against the lower limbs means don’t sweat the lower dead limbs on the interior of the tree too much unless there is a target underneath. A tree that has these dead limbs pruned out will appear to be a healthier tree just because it is clean. Now if there are dead limbs in the upper outer canopy and peppered throughout the tree canopy then there is a health issue going on that has been going on for a long time. A tree responds very slowly and is slow to show the damage incurred from health issues or root loss or even just plain old age. But if you have dead limbs and twigs in the outer most part of your tree(s) then call a licensed certified arborist. Pruning dead limbs out of trees can be beneficial because it aids in making the tree’s healing and recover process shorter. If you have a tree with an abundance of dead limbs in it go ahead and call a certified arborist.

2.08 - WIDOW MAKERS: At this point in the inspection you would have already identified widow makers as a safety concern before walking under the tree and called a certified arborist but I want to explain to pay attention for these. Widow makers are broken limbs that are hung up or still hanging in the tree. Most of the time they are lodged up there pretty good however, I have heard several horror stories throughout my career of people dying or being severely injured by these killers. Be mindful of broken off limbs because they tell the history of the tree and if it has been happening already there is a more than likely chance this will keep happening.

2.09 - SPROUT LIMBS (Epicormic Growth): Sprout limbs are small limbs that literally sprout up but they don’t do it for no reason. Sprout limbs are a stress indicator and they are growing in response to what could be several different things. Pruning creates wounds and that stressor causes epicormic growth to happen. Damage or infection to tree parts can cause the epicormic growth. During extreme old age a very mature tree will go through a phase called retrenchment where it’s outer most parts dwindle and die off while the tree produces more sprout limbs closer to the main trunk. This will allow a tree to extend its life span but is really just living on borrowed time.

2.10 - CRACKS: During your visual tree hazard inspection, be on the lookout for cracks or minor clues of cracking. Cracks seem to most often form or open up inside a fork union or between two attached tree trunks. Referring back to the section in this report about branch attachments the “V” shape is the type to inspect for cracks forming between the two tree parts. Another recent eye opener is the large number of hurricanes to hit Tallahassee and the North Florida Pan Handle. These heavy resulting winds have left trees with internal stressors and

cracks that we don't even know about. These cracks are called shear plane cracks which result when forces applied to the tree such as wind create such a load that the tree literally cracks along the length like two planes sliding across each other. These cracks do not always create a tree failure at first but issues such as these allow internal decay to set in and years down the road when the tree fails most people will wonder, "What caused that?"

2.11 - WOUNDS: Be looking for odd wounds on the tree. On the lower trunk that would be bumps from cars around driveways or roadway edges that knock bark off allowing a source for decay and disease to start. Tree limbs that break off leave a nasty splintered wound at the broken limb section which leaves the tree with poor wound closure. In normal person words that means the tree does not heal easily with such a tattered wound. Wounds can be a source for decay and should be monitored by a professional arborist.

2.12 - NESTING HOLES: Okay, so no one wants to evict a family of squirrels or birds from a critter hole on the side of their tree but pay more attention to those little squirrel holes you see on tree trunks. Those are giant indicators of internal columns of decay. Basically, if a critter can live in it there's a likely chance that the decay is larger than the small hollow that they inhabit. Since critter holes are usually large decay pockets, and trees tend to always break where there is decay, consult with a climbing arborist to determine how significant the hole is to assist in making the decision to cut the tree down or not.

2.13 - SHARP BENDS: Sharp bends in trees are red flags. When there is a sharp change of direction of a tree limb or tree stem, that means that at some point that limb received some type of interference. That could mean that it rubbed into another smaller limb for a few years making it grow around the other limb but the other limb has now died off only leaving this unusually bent limb. Another reason maybe that a branch end got broken off and the nearest lateral limb takes over as the new branch end. The problem with these sharp bends in tree pieces parts is that the bends create oddly shaped levers susceptible to odd types of torque loads.

2.14 - LEVERAGING FORCES: Trees are like levers in the wind. The taller the tree, the more leverage that will be applied to the base of the tree while the tree is experiencing wind loading forces. That theory applies to whole trees from the ground up but also to smaller tree parts. Example... An oak tree looks pretty healthy but has one long limb growing over the roof of the house. Look at the limb and ask yourself, how long is that branch in comparison to the other branches? Does it have branch taper? How is the aspect ratio of limb to trunk size relate? Does it have smaller limbs evenly spaced out especially closer to the tree trunk? If it gets too fluffy and heavy on the end and has bad branch taper then that limb is a bad lever in the wind and likely to break off. Consult with a professional arborist to consider a proper pruning plan.

2.15 - NEIGHBOR'S TREES: Now this can be a touchy subject worthy of it's own educational report titled "Trees and the Law... How to Avoid the Legal Food Chain." But in this report we are simply going to instruct you to assess your neighbors' trees which may negatively affect you. Of course, you will need permission to legally be on their property so I always recommend just performing a visual inspection and when a red flag is raised, do the morally correct thing and knock on the neighbor's door. Let them know your concern, ask them if they are aware of it or what they think about the concern which will open the door for communication

and progress together. On the other hand, they ignore you, they take no action and you have to put them on notice for being negligent. Get a certified arborist to assess the tree and write a professional opinion, send it via certified mail with return receipt and share that with your insurance company and if you have one, your lawyer. I still firmly believe in knocking on the door and doing it the old-fashioned way which always produces better results especially when dealing with someone you have to live next door to!

3.0 - WHAT TO DO NOW?

At this point you have identified your questionable trees; you think that you may need further professional help so it is time to set an appointment with a certified arborist.

We would love to assist you when you get to that point so please visit www.ArborPros.com to request a Free Estimate or Request a Tree Risk Inspection.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM ARBOR PROS:

Expect the best. Expect that you will be communicated with the same business day to be scheduled for your meeting time or for the arborist to stop by to assess. The arborist will call when on his way to your house to assess your trees or look at your specific requests. We will be on time or communicate with you when we cannot. We will operate by morally and ethically high standards. We guarantee Your Satisfaction and if we cannot make you happy, we will not charge you a penny. You will love the feeling of control over your tree situation, you will feel safe and protected having an understanding of your trees. I am confident that you will love us! Learn more at www.ArborPros.com.

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