



# Tree Safety Checklist

There are several types of defects that can increase the risk of tree failure. These include:

- Dead wood:** Dead trees and large dead branches can fall at any time.
- Cracks:** Deep splits through the bark extend into the wood of the tree.
- Decay:** In advanced stages, soft wood or cavities where wood is missing can create hazardous conditions.
- Weak branch unions:** Two or more branches grow too closely together, with bark growing between them. This bark does not hold the branches together.
- Heavy canopies:** Excessively thick branches and foliage catch more wind during stormy weather. This increases the risk of branch breakage and uprooting.
- Cankers:** Caused by fungi, cankers occur on the stems or branches of trees (bark is sunken or missing). Stems or branches are prone to breaking off near cankers.
- Root problems:** Without a strong root system, trees are more likely to be uprooted or blown over in stormy weather. Look out for nearby construction that may sever large roots or compact the soil too much to allow for healthy root growth.
- Poor tree architecture:** This is characterized by excessive leaning of the tree, or branches growing out of proportion with the rest of the tree crown. Odd growth patterns may indicate general weakness or structural imbalance.

## The Solution: Strong branches = stronger tree

- Although defective trees are dangerous, not all of them need to be removed immediately, and some defects can be treated to prolong the life of the tree.
- Arborists will evaluate tree species, soil conditions, wind exposure, defects, overall health and other factors to determine a tree's hazard potential.
- Proper pruning thins the tree canopy, allowing wind to blow through it instead of against it as though it were a sail. Pruning also removes potentially hazardous dead or weak branches.
- Not all tree risks are visible or obvious.
- Advanced analysis, sometimes through the use of specialized arborist tools or techniques, may be necessary.