

## Treeways

2025 3

### Is My Tree Dangerous?

Some of the more common questions that an arborist gets are: “How long will this tree live?”, “Is my tree healthy?”, “Will my tree fall down?”, or “Is my tree dangerous?”. All loaded questions and the answers are maybe, no, and yes or more realistically ... it depends.

All trees start small and grow bigger as they mature. Some species grow quickly and mature quickly and decline and die within decades. Other trees grow more slowly and may not reach their end for 10,000 years or more. I have touched trees as old as 2000– 9,500 years old.

All trees have a normal lifetime, be it decades, centuries, or millennia. City trees or trees that live where people interact with them typically die younger than their relatives out in nature. Larger nursery trees planted into our managed landscapes typically grow slower and less well than trees planted as seeds or saplings. This is due to what people do to trees or around trees.

**Is my tree dangerous?** Well, that depends. How big is it? Does it have a normal, natural root system? Was there any recent building/remodeling near the tree? Any recent storm damage from wind, hail, heavy snow? Diseases or insect infestations or damage? What has the weather been like for the last several years – flood, drought, severe storms? Are vehicles parked under the tree? Does road salt and snow get pushed up around the tree? Deer antler rubbing? Rabbit nibbling? Beavers, voles, porcupines, cattle, woodpeckers, a dog chained to the tree? Is my tree dangerous, well maybe or maybe not? Or perhaps not now but maybe in the future.

If a tree falls in the woods, was it dangerous if there were no people, no property or nothing valuable nearby? I don’t think so. If a tree falls in your front yard, was it dangerous? Probably yes, and you would want to know ahead of time and make arrangement for pruning or removal to mitigate the risk.

If an ash tree dies from an emerald ash borer infestation in your mowed yard, near a pathway, driveway or public street is it a hazard and possibly dangerous? **Yes, and it should not be climbed by anyone since trees killed by emerald ash borer tend to fall apart unpredictably and unexpectedly.** If you are concerned that a tree may be dangerous call a Certified Arborist and ask all your questions. Dangerous or not depends on many issues and a Certified Arborist can help you evaluate the potential risks.