

you look at the target." Targets include people, buildings, cars, bike paths, sidewalks and streets. "I love trees — don't get me wrong," he says. "But the more targets you have, the closer you get to civilization."

EW was unable to find any reports of Eugeneans killed by falling trees or limbs within the city limits. Statewide, there are records of people being injured or killed by falling trees or limbs during major storms, and any number of people are killed each year by crashing their cars into trees. *EW* requested records from the city of Eugene of any people injured or killed by hazardous trees. However, the city says such records would only be made available if *EW* paid to finance a staffer to search the city's records. While the city of Eugene doesn't seem to have any death-related tree reports on hand, the history of Eugene is intertwined with its trees.

EUGENE'S TREE HISTORY

When settlers first came to the area that came to be called Eugene, the Kalapuya Indians had been burning the area for years to encourage the growth of the camas plant and improve game habitat, among other reasons. As a result, the valley was open grassland with scattered groups of oaks. Near the Willamette River, where it was moist, and high on the hills, where there was little burning, older trees grew. According to the official city of Eugene history, which includes great detail on the trees in the area, bigleaf maples and Douglas firs joined the oaks in parts of the area with willows, alders and cottonwoods near the river.

Eugene was incorporated in 1862, and as more and more settlers came to the area, the native peoples left. Key to Eugene's tree history was that when the native peoples began to leave, they stopped the valley burning that held trees at bay. So it was in the late 1800s that the majority of Eugene's trees took root. As a result, most of Eugene's oldest trees are a little more than 100 years old.

The next major event for Eugene's trees was the 1962 Columbus Day storm. Wind gusts blew down 11.2 billion board feet of timber in Eugene and Washington, including trees that were 1,000 years old. Eugene had wind gusts at peaks of 86 miles per hour, according to the National Weather Service. Sixty-six trees blew down on the UO campus alone, with others removed later due to damage. Many of Eugene's older street trees still show the evidence from the damage of that storm, which can now designate them a hazard.

WHEN THE TREES FALL . . .

To assess tree risks, Eugene's arborists look at the types and sizes of defects and the probability of failure and target damage, a tree risk assessment standard recognized by the Pacific Northwest Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture. Tree defects include, but are not limited to, root decline, decay, fungal or bacterial diseases and insect infestations.

The city allows homeowners and developers, who find trees blocking their view or that want to build driveways where a tree is in the way, to apply to the city for a permit to remove the tree or ask the city to assess whether the tree is a hazard. Bigleaf maples, which make up many of Eugene's street trees, are banned from being planted in the city of Seattle because of their aggressive roots that Seattle says can damage sidewalks.



'People have emotional attachments to trees.'
— Mark Snyder, city of Eugene urban forester

"There's a lot of distrust in the community about how the city removes trees," Snyder says, but adds, "We don't just remove trees because we don't like them or because some rich developers want space to build."

Snyder says that he's worked hard to make the removal process transparent to residents. The city follows a rigorous tree inspection process that often involves multiple site visits, Snyder says. This is followed by a public comment period, indicated with bright orange city of Eugene Urban Forestry notices of removal

that include contact information and the length of the comment period. Snyder adds, "I could not live with myself if I allowed a hazard tree to stand, and it hurt someone." The public has 15 days to protest the cutting down of a tree 12 inches in diameter or larger.

In 2006, city contractors cut down an estimated 408 trees. The city designated 361 of the trees as hazardous or dead, and 47 were removed by request from private interests. In the previous decade, contractors removed, on average, 491 trees — 205 hazard trees per year

and 286 per year through land development permits.

Six years ago, the Rest-Haven Memorial Park cemetery development project in west Eugene removed 1,427 trees. This was by far the greatest number of trees removed on a single permit in the last decade. The Woodleaf Village development on Fox Hollow Road in south Eugene followed with 324 trees, and then Lane County removed 295 trees on Centennial Loop, off MLK Boulevard.

In addition to street trees removed, Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB) also removed about 350 trees last year, according to Lance Robertson, EWEB's external communications director. "This number includes trees that were deemed dead or hazardous by the city," Robertson says. It also includes some trees outside the Eugene area up the McKenzie River where EWEB has transmission lines, he says.

Robertson says when it comes down to a conflict between a power line and a tree planted directly below, "normally the power line wins." Since roughly the late 1960s or early 1970s, many new power lines have been placed underground. However, though burying power lines reduces tree conflicts, it's more expensive to maintain underground lines. "One advantage is that there are fewer outages, but it takes longer to locate and fix problems underground," Robertson says.

It would cost approximately \$700 million to bury all power lines in the Eugene area, which "would create a substantial rate increase," Robertson says.

Tree hazard reports are available free to the public from the city if people want to know more details about what's going on with a specific tree. Lists of trees to be removed come out once or twice a month. "People have emotional attachments to trees," Snyder says. On occasion he's met with concerned residents on site to discuss a tree's fate, not unlike the situation with Lovinger's redwood.

Residents can negotiate with the contractor to keep the wood from trees removed on their property and what remains is hauled away by the city's contractors or given to local artists. Buena Vista Arbor Care, the current contractor, says much of the wood goes for firewood, and the remainder is dumped in the contractor's 50 acre yard. Hardwoods like bigleaf maples are quite valuable. Bigleaf maple is used to make guitar bodies and fine furniture. When the wood from a bigleaf has distinctive whorls and ripples, it can be worth thousands of dollars, according to a *Seattle Times* article on bigleaf maple thefts.

The hazard trees removed last year varied in size and type. According to information from Snyder, the majority — about 76 percent — were under a diameter at breast height (DBH) of 30 inches and were bigleaf maples and sweetgums. Bigleaf maples are native Oregon trees, and sweetgums are native to the eastern U.S. The biggest hazard tree removed was a tree of heaven with a 55 inch DBH. The fast-growing tree of heaven is a species native to China and considered to be invasive, according to the USDA National Invasive Species Information Center. It's "weak wood," according to Eugene Public Works.

A bigleaf maple with DBH of 30 inches is due to be removed in the next two weeks, according to a memo put out by Public Works on Nov. 8. In the same memo two western redcedars, native to Oregon, with DBH listed of 29 inches, as well as a 39 inch Siberian elm, were slated to be cut down.