When a Tree Falls...

By Sophie Braccini



www.lamorindaweekly.com

trees and neighboring structures. And while a dry winter can make tree roots where the city might have landscaped, stronger, the threat of pests like the they keep an eye on the trees. bark beetle increases in drought conditions. Understanding your trees, compromised, Swanson indicates that and what you need to do when they come down, or need to be taken down, can save a lot of time and money.

The first step is to make an assessment of trees on your property. Do they show signs of infestation? Are they leaning toward a neighbor's property or right-of-way? Are they a protected native species?

If a tree is native to the area, such as valley oak or black oak, removing a tree can be more complicated, requiring permits with various supporting evidence, mitigation and consequences for non-compliance.

Removing a protected tree without a permit in Moraga is considered a misdemeanor, while Lafayette requires compensation. "A person who destroys or removes a protected tree in violation of this chapter shall pay restitution to the city by replacing each six-inches or its fraction of the
If the neighbor does not want to take diameter of the protected tree with four replacement 24-inch box trees of certified letter to the tree's owner so the same species," reads Lafayette's municipal code.

The three Lamorinda cities cite that native trees contribute to the natural scenic beauty, habitat for wildlife, semi-rural character and quality of life in the area. Making sure your trees are healthy and not a potential hazard can lessen future complications.

When a tree falls on your property, most homeowner's insurance health of local pine trees. "After the will cover the damage, after you've high December rains we could have paid the deductible. But what hap-seen a lot of trees falling over, but the knocks out a power line, or if a tree more stable," he says, "but now we located in the right-of-way needs to will be in danger of tree mortality in be removed?

way, rules are different in the three tles around their big pine trees." Lamorinda cities. "If a tree has been Sarah Allen, Lafayette planning technician, "but if it's always been there, it is the adjacent property owner who has to take care of it."

In Orinda, Public Works Director of-way adjacent to their property. "If www.ipm.ucdavis.edu.

Photo Andy Scheck uring the winter, high winds a tree falls, the property owner will and rain can be hazardous to have to have it removed," he said, adding that in the downtown area

> If the tree is diseased or seems his department can be called to give an assessment. "We can do this (assessment), and will often recommend that an arborist be called," he adds. That assessment can be useful if a neighbor's tree starts leaning toward your property.

Who's Responsible?

"When a tree falls from your property into someone else's, we consider it 'an act of God," says one local residential insurance broker who preferred not to be identified. "It is typically your neighbor's insurance company that will take care of the damage." That is, if there is no negligence on the part of the tree's owner.

"The best thing to do if you're concerned about a neighbor's tree is to try to find a neighborly solution," the broker says. "Maybe call the city services or an arborist to get a report and find a common sense solution." action, the broker suggests sending a that if damage occurs there is documentation regarding the issue.

As far as tree/powerline interface, PG&E has the responsibility to trim and maintain the trees that might cause damage to their lines, and can access trees on private property if it deems the trees are a hazard, says local arborist David Wood.

Wood's bigger concern is the pens if your tree falls on your neigh- last 10 weeks have dried down the bor's property, in the right-of-way and root system, making the trees a lot the late summer or fall, and people For trees that are in the right-of- should be watching out for bark bee-

Fresh signs of infestation are pitch planted by the city, then it is our re-tubes: gummy looking resins mixed sponsibility to take care of it," says with wood chips, anywhere on the trunk, most commonly on the first three feet. Old evidence of infestation looks like dry sugar at the base of the

Fortunately, trees can be sprayed Charles Swanson indicates that in restor save them. For a list of treatment idential districts property owners are options, visit the UC Davis Integrated responsible for the trees in the right- Pest Management website at

What are the protected native species of trees in Lamorinda?

valley oak (Quercus lobata), live oak (Quercus agrifolia), black oak (Quercus kelloggii), white oak (Quercus garryana), canyon oak (Quercus chrysolepis), blue oak (Quercus douglasii), interior live oak (Quercus wislizenii).

Additional protected trees or requirements for specific

Lafayette

California bay (Umbellularia californica) California buckeye (Aesculus californica) Madrone (Arbutus menziesii)

Orinda

Riparian trees – a tree within 30 feet of the edge of a creek bank or a tree beyond 30 feet but in such proximity to a creek bank that it requires or tolerates soil moisture levels in excess of that available in adjacent uplands.

Removal of all native trees requires a permit unless they are located within five feet of an existing building. S. Braccini



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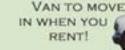
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