

Plymouth County Cooperative Extension MEMO
Potential Hazard Trees | August 29, 2007



TO: Plymouth County Boards of Selectmen, Conservation Commissions,
Tree Wardens/Town Foresters, DPW, Park Commissions,
Town Administrators, Town Clerks

CC: Plymouth County Commissioners; Plymouth County Board of Trustees;
C. Burnham, Program Supervisor, MDCR; K. Carroll, Director, UMass Ext.
Landscape, Nursery, & Urban Forestry Program

FROM: Deborah C. Swanson, Extension Educator
Plymouth County Cooperative Extension
Landscape, Nursery, & Urban Forestry Program

DATE: August 29, 2007

TOPIC: **Potential Hazardous Trees**

I am writing this memo to alert you to a situation that may be of interest to you as a town official.

Over the past several years, unusually high populations of various caterpillars (Winter moth, forest tent and gypsy moth) were observed feeding on deciduous trees in Plymouth County and other areas in Southeastern MA. In many areas, some oak trees were defoliated repeatedly from 2004-2006. When trees lose their leaves, they often become weakened and stressed. Unfortunately, many of these oak trees were stressed further by drought and possibly insects and disease.

The result of all this stress to the oak trees is that we are now seeing thousands of dead or declining oak trees in Plymouth County, as well as in other areas in Southeastern MA. I spoke with Charles Burnham, head of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation's Office of Forest Health, and he said that he has never seen so many dead oak trees in Southeastern, MA in over 40 years. We are both concerned about the potential hazard that these trees may pose to people or property, as many of these dead oaks are over-hanging public areas, roadways and utility lines, as well as private property. Some Plymouth County towns are being pro-active and are marking trees for take down before hurricane season and winter storms.

Several Plymouth County residents have called the Plymouth County Extension office inquiring whether 'the dead oaks trees will come back'. The answer, of course is "no" and "if the trees pose a threat, they should be safely removed".

I contacted The Enterprise, which wrote an article on the dead oaks. In addition, a Boston TV, Channel 5 reporter, David Brown came to West Bridgewater, MA to feature a story on the same subject. The program aired on August 28, 2007

I hope you find this information helpful and if you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.