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NEWS

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Storm-Damaged Trees Will Benefit from Winter Treatments

BROOMFIELD, Colo. – Many communities along the Front Range and in eastern Colorado sustained major tree damage from snowstorms in late October and early November. These trees, like all urban trees and shrubs, require a regimen of year-round care to remain in top health.

“Trees in our cities and towns require care in every season,” said Keith Wood, community forester for the Colorado State Forest Service. “While trees are dormant over winter, it’s usually a good time to schedule annual pruning. But this year, other than dealing with broken and unsafe branches, you may want to hold off on any additional pruning to storm-damaged trees.”

Wood offers the following tips to prepare Colorado’s urban trees for winter:

- **Hold off on pruning.** If your trees lost many branches to the early-season snowstorms, wait at least another year to resume regularly scheduled pruning. This will allow damaged trees time to recover.
- **Water appropriately.** During extended dry periods over winter (e.g., 2-3 weeks without snow cover), provide supplemental water to each tree’s root system at the rate of 10 gallons per inch of tree diameter. Water the area from just outside the trunk to the extent of the longest branches. The best time for winter watering is on warmer days, when snow has melted off and the temperature is above 40 degrees.
- **Wrap the trunk.** In Colorado, thin-barked trees like honeylocust, ash, maple and linden are susceptible to sunscald and frost cracks because of the drastic temperature fluctuations in fall and winter. To prevent bark damage, guard the trunks of younger trees up to the first branches using commercial tree wrap. Be sure to remove the wrap by early April to prevent the buildup of excess moisture.
- **Mulch the base.** Apply 2 to 4 inches of wood chips, bark or other organic mulch near the base of the tree, but not against it, to reduce soil evaporation, improve water absorption and insulate against temperature extremes. Check with your community’s recycling program, as they often provide wood chips free of charge.
- **Focus your efforts.** Younger, more recently planted trees require the most care to minimize stress.

For more information about urban tree care, visit the Colorado State Forest Service website at csfs.colostate.edu or call 303-438-9338.

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