

MAINTENANCE » THE URBAN FOREST

Does anyone hear if a tree falls in

As a matter of fact, the arborists do, as they work seven days a week to clear the damage. I

BY BERT ARCHER

There's nothing like a tree crashing into your backyard to get you thinking about the urban forest — though not in the way tree activists might like.

"Ugh, too many trees," says Riverdale resident Teodor Woeszczak, who had a Lombardi poplar tumble into his backyard during last Friday's storm. "It looks more like a forest. They grow too high and take all the sunshine away."

But Mr. Woeszczak was luckier than many of the unprecedented 6,000 people who have called the city for assistance with damaged or fallen trees this year (last year's total was 4,500). He has a big family, and they all have chainsaws. By the end of Saturday, the tree was nicely butchered and stacked.

While waiting for the city to pick up the branches, Mr. Woeszczak took out an ad in Buy & Sell to see if he could make a little off his late tree.

According to some arborists, the damage caused to trees in this year's three storms on March 1, June 8 and June 19 is the worst ever seen in Toronto. And climatologists say climate change will create more severe weather. Is the city's plan to increase its tree canopy from its



'These things are thousands of pounds, and hanging 50 feet above us,' arborist Todd Irvine says. BORIS SPREMO FOR

storm. He says a big job, involving the removal of an entire tree, will probably cost on aver-

we're not doing nearly enough in this regard. "When I walk around the city, I'm looking at

most recent storms. "It's not about how long it's taking to clean up," he adds. It's about

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e ones people call about.
With the stock of Norway ma-
es that were planted at the

A tree inventory

Nobody actually knows how many trees are in this city or what condition they're in. Estimates run at 6 to 7 million. Since there's not even enough money to prune and water the trees effectively, an inventory is out of the question. Which is where Andy Kenney comes in.

A senior lecturer in urban forestry at the University of Toronto, he's set up "Neighbourwood," a program to help community groups do their own inventories.

Residents in Harbord Village are currently taking advantage of Prof. Kenney's protocol, which enables non-arborists to count, measure and assess all the trees in their neighbourhoods.

"What we're trying to do ... is identify trees that have issues now," says Prof. Kenney.

If you're interested in conducting a tree inventory, call Prof. Kenney at 416-978-0474.

)) Bert Archer

Stuck on you

Wondering what's causing that sticky mess all over your windshields lately? It's not the maples. It's aphids.

"Aphids produce their young this time of year," explains David

current 17 per cent coverage to something approaching, say, Washington's 40 per cent really a good idea?

For most Torontonians with fallen trees, it meant a search through the Yellow Pages to find an arborist, who charges from about \$100 an hour to flat fees of thousands of dollars.

It also meant a wait. "Most reputable companies will be busy this time of year even without a storm," says Al Miley of Al Miley and Associates. "What we try to do is help our regular customers with their storm damage first, and then book in everyone else."

Though he tries to maintain a three-to-four-day turnaround for new customers, he says there are still some he has not been able to get to yet with his staff of 14 a full week after the

age about \$2,000, though he did one especially complicated job - a tree one metre in diameter had fallen across another, healthy 40-metre tree - that took six men 10 hours and cost the owners more than \$6,000.

"These things are thousands of pounds, and hanging 50 feet above us," arborist Todd Irvine says. He's a consultant with Bruce Tree Expert Co. Ltd. and a member of Local Enhancement & Appreciation of Forests (LEAF), a non-profit group that works to increase awareness of the urban forest, which in Toronto consists of about six million trees on public and private land. "The least we can do," he adds, "is to see if they're going to fall on us."

According to Mr. Irvine, who is sometimes contracted as an arborist by the City of Toronto,

it with two eyes," he says.

"With my consulting eye, it's hard for me to look up sometimes, to be honest."

What he sees with his consulting eye is a stock of street trees in desperate need of the most basic kind of care, a care the city's 25 teams of arborists have been unable to consistently provide with the amount of funding they've received. (This year, the request for the new tree program was \$1.5-million; they got \$500,000.)

He sees trees that have been pruned to provide views for homeowners rather than structural integrity for the trees and, even more alarming, trees that simply have not had enough water and as a result get very brittle in the summer, a condition he said certainly led to much of the damage in the two

"why they fall in the first place."

For the most part, Richard Ubbens, the city's director of forestry, agrees. Though he doesn't have any figures yet for how much work has yet to be done, he says his teams are working flat out clearing up the mess and removing the trees that have been irreparably damaged, which in Mr. Ubbens's estimate make up one-sixth to one-fifth of the calls received. That's about 1,000 trees.

Even though recent funding increases of about \$1-million a year for the past three years has allowed for 9,000 more work orders to be filled yearly, it's not enough. "We're reactive, not pro-active," he says, explaining that, for now, the only trees that get looked after are

n of the past century now
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an, a new rash of more di-
rse planting is supplying the
ees that will populate our
reets and parks into the next
entury. According to Mr. Ub-
ns, the new ones are mostly
tive species, including burr
k, hackberry, silver maple,
stern red bud, sycamore, tu-
o trees and black walnut.
And – something Mr. Miley,
r. Irvine and Mr. Ubbens all
ade a point of saying – the
y to a healthy and wind-re-
tant urban forest is proper
re when the trees are young.
For front-yard, park and
reet trees, it means a signifi-
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e item as seriously unglam-
ous as tree maintenance.

pecial to *The Globe and Mail*

Gibo, a professor in the biology department at the University of Toronto's Mississauga campus.

To build strength, aphids suck up sap from "the phloem tubes of leaves," where the products of photosynthesis are stored, Prof. Gibo says. And what they excrete is the goo that falls to the leaves and then on to your parked auto.

"They have a sucking beak much like a mosquito," Prof. Gibo says. "The sap goes through their body and it's a very diluted soup of sugars and amino acids, with emphasis on the sugar ..."

The drop after drop of sugar solution, aphid poo, is officially known as "honeydew."

Prof. Gibo says there are many reasons why aphid excreta seems more noticeable this year, including lack of rain and a dearth of natural enemies.

» *Izabela Szydlo*