

# THE SAFE STEP

Your connection to protecting those who improve your community



## TREE MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

### THE GIVING TREE'S SECOND LIFE: A STORY OF SAFETY AND STEWARDSHIP

There once was a grand old tree named Sage. Much like the story of The Giving Tree, Sage had spent decades offering shade to picnicking families, stories were read beneath her limbs, and she extended a peaceful canopy for birds and squirrels.

One summer, after a particularly stormy spring, a branch cracked and fell—thankfully missing the walking path by mere inches. It was a wake-up call.

The caretakers realized that even the most giving trees need care in return. So, they started a Tree Wellness Program, inspired by Sage and her quiet generosity.



### TREE WELLNESS PROGRAM: SAFETY TIPS INSPIRED BY SAGE

#### Know Your Limits

Understand when to have internal trained staff handle tasks and when to use a certified arborist. Consider the age, species and condition of your tree. Certain species have more brittle, less dense wood than others like pecan, eucalyptus, silver maple and others. Your city or state may offer guidance on planting tree species ([e.g. Annapolis, MD](#)).

Tasks Handled by Trained Internal Staff	Tasks Needing Certified Arborist or Specialized Tree Care
✓ Mapping and journaling tree records	✗ Diagnosing tree diseases
✓ Mulching	✗ Managing soil compaction
✓ Watering	✗ Performing risk assessments
✓ Light pruning	✗ Operating specialized equipment that requires additional training or certification.
✓ Educating staff, participants, and visitors on the basics	✗ Pruning near animal enclosures or public areas
	✗ Tree removal or root therapy

There are different types of arborists - urban v. commercial v. utility. Consider what type you need. Consider what type of training employees' of the tree trimming business receive and if there is someone more specialized on site when the trimming work is being done. When contracting certified arborists, be sure to check that the third party is reputable, meets all [OSHA standards](#) for tree care safety, and has proper insurance in place. Always have your general counsel thoroughly review your contract before finalizing.

## Organizational Policies and Procedures

Incorporate the written standards by referencing expert sources like the International Society of Arborticulture's *Best Management Practices* and American National Standard (ANSI) A300 Tree Care Standards.

Your internal policies should clearly outline what parties are responsible for dedicated tasks. This should also clearly define what equipment can be used, safety procedures and requirements that meet acceptable OSHA standards.

Establish an incident reporting policy with clear definitions, reporting mechanisms, and response protocols, ensuring timely action and accountability.

## Tree Journals

Dedicated staff should map all trees – species, age, location hazards, inspections, treatments, and growth milestones. Log all risk assessments, pruning, and removal of trees. Maintain records permanently.

Implement a simple risk rating system to help prioritize tree care and resource allocation

## Routine Assessments

Your certified arborist will inspect for signs of pests, disease, decay, weather risk, and structural weakness of your trees.

Inspection frequency should be guided by American National Standards (ANSI) A300 standards, which recommend intervals based on species, age, and location. Changing weather patterns, including unexpected freezes, may warrant more frequent inspections and updated internal guidelines.

## Soil Management

Your certified arborist will test soil for pH, nutrients, drainage, and compactions. Based on test results, aeration and fertilization may be needed.

Mulch should be placed annually to help regulate temperature and retain moisture.

## Safe Zones

Create buffer zones around older trees, ensuring that no playground equipment or benches are placed directly beneath heavy limbs. Designs should follow Advancing Standards Transforming Markets (ASTM) F1487 standards for playground clearance and consider root compaction risks from foot traffic.

Additional specific zones may be needed based on your operations and risk hazards.

## Storm Readiness and Response

Before storm season, trim vulnerable branches and reinforce trees near high-traffic areas to prevent accidents. Restrict access to high hazard areas and coordinate with emergency response teams to identify staging areas and resource needs. Post-storm checks should be made and debris cleaned immediately. Have unsalvageable trees that pose hazards professionally removed.

## Education for All

Distribute flyers and display signs to help teach campers and zoo visitors how to respect trees—no climbing without permission, no carving initials, and how to report broken branches. Communication between all departments is necessary to help ensure the safety of both animals and guests, especially when scheduling for pruning in or near animal enclosures.

**And so, the story of the Giving Tree evolved. It became not just a tale of selfless giving, but a reminder that stewardship is a two-way street. Trees give, and we must give back—through care, respect, and safety.**