

# Get Proper Approval Before Doing Anything With Trees in Your Yard

It is already into February, and so far the weather predictions that said this winter would be colder and wetter than normal because of El Niño have been half right. We definitely have received more rain than normal this winter, but the cold weather has been late to arrive and so far has had minimal impact to our landscapes.

I live west of The Villages in Oxford, and while driving to work I have seen frost on the pastures only four or five times this winter, and the lows at my house have dipped down to around 29 degrees for only a brief time.

This is still low enough for us to take precautions to shut off our irrigation where it affects roadways or multimodal paths. This is done just in case it gets cold enough for ice to form, to avoid slippery conditions or damage to tender plantings such as annual flower beds.

Am I complaining? No, but having grown up in north Florida, I know that as the late Yogi Berra once said, "It ain't over till it's over." We are still susceptible to a damaging cold snap well into March.

Local folklore suggests we are not safe from a hard freeze in our area any time before or during the last full moon toward the end of March or the beginning of April. While I could not find information to confirm this, I have had tender plants in the garden damaged by frost or a hard freeze around those times.

The worst thing that can occur for some of our plants is for it to get unseasonably warm again for several weeks, followed by a late-season cold snap.



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When this occurs, the warm weather fools some plants into flushing out with succulent new growth, only for the cold weather to come and freeze it all off. So don't put those blankets, sheets and frost cloths away just yet!

Last week, Diane Tucker wrote a great article about deed restrictions and the Architectural Review Committee and how the process works. The three gentlemen who work with me in the landscape department and I all are International Society of Arboriculture-certified arborists. We each assist the ARC by providing our opinions and assessments on trees that residents request to get permission to remove for a variety of reasons.

The requests for removal range from a tree being too large for the area, dropping leaves or being messy, and concerns about driveway or curbing damage. Sometimes these are concerns that we can validate, but often we suggest alternatives such as root pruning and installation of a root barrier by a qualified experienced contractor, especially if the tree meets certain criteria by being a certain workable distance from utilities or hardscapes, and there is nothing structurally or otherwise wrong with the tree to warrant removal.

The reason I am mentioning this is we recently received phone calls concerning a rumor that if the tree is dead, or is affecting utilities or infrastructure such as curbing, sidewalks or a driveway, a resident does not have to get ARC approval.

This is simply not the case and the process must be followed just the same if it is 4 inches or greater in diameter or if the request is being made for any other reason.

In addition to receiving ARC approval, the Town of Lady Lake also requires a permit for removal of any tree that is greater than 4 inches or more in diameter, and they may fine the property owner if they do not get proper approval before removing a tree.

The Town of Lady Lake also has an ordinance that prohibits the topping, pollarding or lions-tailing of a tree within their boundaries. They have been enforcing this and issuing fines and likely will continue to do so.

This is also a perfect opportunity to address contractors soliciting and performing tree-related work even though they do not have proper certifications.

There are plenty of websites that show what improper types of pruning looks like, and if you type in "ISA why topping hurts trees," you can pull up information and pictures that show and explain why this practice is not good for the trees.

In addition to seeking approval for removing a tree, please also verify that the individual or company is

reputable and has the necessary certifications to perform

the work. If they perform trimming on a tree outside of best practices, or if it is unnecessary, it actually can make the tree more dangerous and costly in the long

run than if it were trimmed properly.

That's all for me this time, but I look forward to meeting you again, here at Our Place.

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