

If it hasn't leafed out by now, chances are it never will. Since early spring, I have fielded numerous calls from concerned homeowners asking what to do regarding trees and shrubs that leafed out poorly or not at all. My usual response to them has been, "Wait and see." Now that it is mid-July, if one's tree or shrub is still void of leaves, more than likely it will forever remain void of leaves. It is dead.

While waiting to see if one's tree or shrub leafs out, I suggested to worried homeowners to check if the branch is still alive. All one needs to do is scratch away the bark on a twig to examine the cambium. The cambium is the living tissue beneath the bark that is the lifeline of a tree. If, after scraping away the bark, they see a bright green color, life still exists; whereas, if the cambium is tan to brownish in color, that part of the tree is dead. Some homeowners even ask me, "If I wait until next year, will my tree then leaf out?" My response is a resounding no. The fact is a deciduous tree or shrub cannot continue to live if it goes one season without leaves. Although the barren branches are still flexible and bend easily, they are dead. By summer's end, they will still be dead and by then brittle.

Earlier this spring I wrote about a weather phenomenon called the Polar Vortex that Central Nebraska experienced in early November of 2014 and again later in February of 2015. It is my theory that such adverse weather conditions caused the death of many trees and shrubs. Simply put, winter kill was the reason. Like many of you, Rita and I also experienced tree loss. We lost our beautiful corkscrew willow and our 'October Glory' red maple tree, each at least twenty years old.

The question now might be, "Where does one go from here?" It's obvious when a tree is completely dead, it needs to be removed. However, what should one do if the tree is partially leafed out, yet scattered throughout the canopy are dead barren branches?

Losing a major share of a tree's canopy causes great stress to the tree. After heavy loss, some trees have the ability to regenerate and survive; however, some continue on a downward spiral that results in death a few years later. If a tree has lost more than fifty percent of its canopy, it would be wise to remove the tree and start anew. If the loss of canopy is less than fifty percent, prune out the dead branches and wait and see. However, if symmetry and aesthetics have been destroyed after removing the dead branches, starting over might be the best option.



Nick Benson

Removal was the plan of action Rita and I took this past week. Although it saddened us to see our trees removed, we were most pleased, impressed and fascinated by the skills and talents of our arborist. I had initially planted the corkscrew willow close to our deck and near the power line coming into our home. The willow had been growing over a number of shorter understory trees and shading a flower border. Its removal called for the expertise of a skilled arborist.

We secured the services of *Benson Tree Service*, a local area arborist. The willow tree, due to its precarious location, had to be removed carefully to avoid damage to other trees. Nick Benson, son of owner Kevin Benson, expertly demonstrated his talents and tree cutting skills by climbing high into

our willow tree with only harness, rope, and chainsaw. There, he meticulously removed the tree working from the top down, piece by piece. Once cut free, each piece was strategically dropped to the lawn and dragged away for disposal. Amazingly, not a single understory tree was harmed. Not even one branch was broken.

In summary, if it hasn't leafed out by now, chances are it never will. More than likely, pruning or removal is the next step. That being the case, for your safety, secure the services of a professional arborist.



Nick and Kevin