

A Tree to Consider: Replacement or Removal

By Sharon Burch

Recently, folks have been asking what can be done to keep neighbors from cutting down large and seemingly healthy trees. When my family moved into its current home there were three extremely large trees of varying degrees of health. The first thing we did was to ask the late Plato Toulaitos, long-time landscape expert, for a tree assessment. His advice, in a nutshell, was to plant some new trees as soon as possible. He estimated our trees to be in the last 20 percent of their life cycle, meaning they could fall within the week or hold off another 30 years.

Approximately 15 years ago, we took down the least healthy tree and replaced it with four new specimens: a Ginkgo, a Dawn Redwood, a Japanese Cryptomeria and a Big-leaf Magnolia. The final step did not occur for another 10 years. As the tops of the new trees met the bottom of the last remaining old tree, we removed the old. At 15 years old, none of the new trees are wondrous, but they are on their way to being worthy replacements.

I miss that soaring ancient oak in front of our home. Then I remember we are the most temporary aspect of our homes and gardens. At best, we are but stewards. Planting a tree at the cost of \$200 or \$300 has implications that can easily last 100 years or more. As a member of CGA, you may be able to take advantage of the Tree Replacement Program by requesting a FREE TREE. Just send an email to admin@centralgardens.org, with FREE TREE in the subject line and include your name, address, email address and phone number. You will be contacted promptly.

Also, the Tennessee Urban Forestry Council (www.tufc.com) has certified arborists who will for a small fee of under \$100 give you a tree assessment. One is Wes Hopper, who can be reached at (901) 212-8822 or urban4etry@aol.com). So why not make a small investment in your property and neighborhood this spring? Your children – and their kids – will thank you for it.