

## **Trees left to stand alone often don't last; there are better ways**

By Fred Morgan

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Until just recently, new subdivisions have been popping up all over the county. It has been common to see wholesale "falling and hauling" of entire stands of trees in order to provide more ground for development.

At the same time, it has been ironic to see how any old tree will sell a parcel as a "wooded lot."

These survivor trees, once upon a time in the middle of an actual wooded stand, were formerly protected from the stresses of weather and wind by their surrounding brothers.

But now, those brothers are no longer there. Now they stand alone without the benefit of lateral branch development, which would provide not only shade but stability in the way a tightrope walker's pole provides stability.

They stand alone without the benefit of rich soil anchoring and nurturing roots that have been graded away with that top soil so that the lot could meet code and drain properly.

And there in the once-protective middle of their now-gone brothers, they never had to develop the tension and compression wood in their cellular growth over the years that would enable them to withstand the stresses of wind and weather.

These undeveloped and newly-damaged survivors now stand alone and forlorn, without normal branch development, along some property line or abutting foundation, just waiting for the first capable wind or ice event to topple them.

These survivors are for the first time exposed to what they never were before. And they frequently fail. Or they just die.

So it may be actually better ... indeed preferable, just to knock everything down. That is, if the goal is maximum lot count and maximum profit.

But there is a better way. It requires thoughtful and strategic subdividing that mandates

fewer and larger lots for a given overall tract size.

It requires more and strategically located greenbelt spaces. It requires a real interest in looking at innovative options for infrastructure installations and a focus on serious tree protection zones.

The net effect of all of this will be long-term improved tree survival rates, enhanced property appearance and values, far more precious summertime shady living space and an elevated pride of ownership and quality of life.

My father used to tell me that 'there's a right way and a wrong way to do anything.' Frequently, the quickest way and maybe the most immediately profitable way is not the right way in the long view. And there is almost always an additional price to pay for doing it wrong, a price that in cases like this, the new homeowner and the entire community is often left to pay.

Certified arborist Fred Morgan of Cordova has owned and operated Morgan Tree Service since 1974, and is involved in arboricultural consulting, diagnostics and problem solving. His column appears in Home & Garden once a month. Get more tree info at [morgantreeservice.com](http://morgantreeservice.com).



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