

FOR 1/2/19 PUBLICATION

The loss of leaves in deciduous trees makes winter a worthwhile time to examine your property to see more clearly the nature of your vegetated surroundings. The visual divisions can be stark when there's snow on the ground - naked deciduous trees and dark conifers with a white background. A forester will often use this time to evaluate tree spacing. By looking at trees that may need to be thinned due to crowding, the eye and mind are not confused by a leafy mottled green background. A person can pick out crowding and examine the crowns for relative tree vigor. This is, however, a bad time to evaluate oak and other deciduous trees, since dying tree limbs are more difficult to see - or worse, they all look dead! It is, however, a good time to see nests in branches and trunk hollows, alerting to bird and mammal activity.

A homeowner can do the same walk, noting dead branches and tops, even carrying a saw or long handled lopper in a single examination pass. Flagging definitely helps to remind one of areas or specific trees which will need revisiting. The walk will give a better idea of what will need tool work, and what tools. Much work can be done with hand tools, and the walking exercise will undoubtedly do some good for your physical and mental well-being.

Some of your findings may be unwelcome and point to needs for greater skill or larger tools for removal. Dead trees are particularly important to recognize, and the longer a dead tree stands, the greater its chances of failure. Eventually all trees will end up on the ground, and evaluation of their targets when they fall is worthwhile for property and human protection. The Plumas County Fire Safe Council has lists of tree workers, as well as forms to sign up for the free county-wide chipping program.

If the walk goes far into the woods, burn piles may be needed to get rid of the debris. Plans for their placement include avoiding proximity to remaining standing trees and to other piles, thinking ahead that winds may alter plans of where heat and smoke will go, once ignited. Being able to pull debris downhill is a definite plus. Piling is considered an art form by some 'burners' and will be covered in a future release.

The next Fire Safe Council meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 10th, 2019 from 9:00 am to 11:00 am at the Plumas County Planning & Building Services office, 555 Main Street in Quincy. Council meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month and are attended by citizens, business owners, and representatives from local, state, and federal government agencies, who share a common interest in preventing loss of life and minimizing loss of property from wildland fires.

[written by Don Gasser]