Tree Specialists, Inc.

Conservation | Preservation | Restoration

Structural Tree Support — Bracing and Cabling

Structural bracing and cabling of trees has been practiced for centuries and is still one of the best techniques available to increase the structural stability of trees with defects. A tree defect may be caused by a variety of factors including poor architecture, weak branch unions, cracks and cavities. When properly installed, structural braces can reduce the risk of tree failure, preserving the tree and protecting adjacent property.

Cable Braces are made of high strength steel and are attached to bolts installed in the upper crown of a tree. They provide supplemental support to limit the movement of stems and branches reducing the likelihood of fracture.

Rod Braces are threaded rods, installed through unions of weak branches and multiple stems to provide more rigid support from twisting forces.

Assessing defects and prescribing the proper type and location of structural braces requires a great deal of experience and expertise. Improperly installed systems can actually increase the risk of tree failure.

The three primary reasons to consider structural tree support include:

- **Conserve** — to save young or middle-aged structurally defective trees that are otherwise healthy and capable of living out a normal life span.
- **Preserve** — to retain and prolong the life of older specimens that are inherently more at risk of failure due to the natural effects of age on the tree structure.
- **Secure** — to reduce the risk of tree failure and damage to persons and property.

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Common tree defects include:

Weak branch unions —— places where branches are not strongly attached to the tree. This is common in trees with upright, multi-stem canopy structures such as maples, elms and oaks, but is found in all tree species to some extent.

Cavities — hollow or rotten portions of branch or stem wood where decay fungi have broken down a portion of the woody tissue.

Seams and cracks —can be a naturally occurring growth defect or be caused by excessive movement during storms or wind events.

For additional information, please refer to the "Structural Tree Care" section at www.treespecialists.com.