

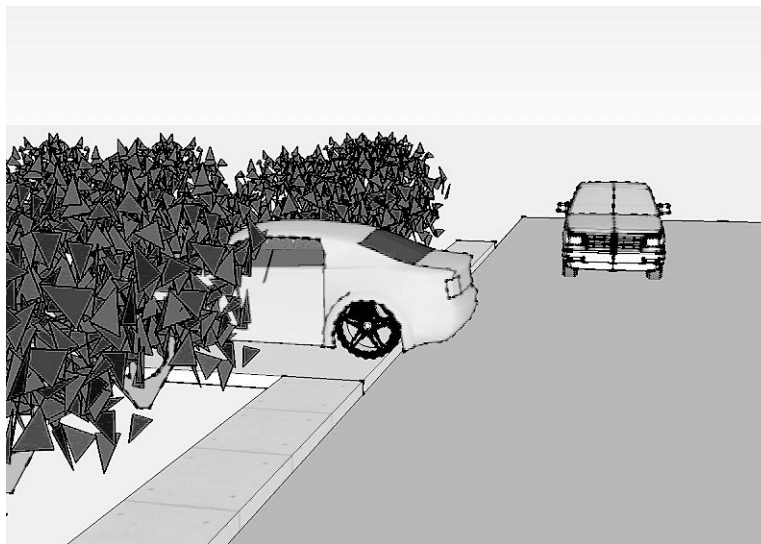


## Residential Landscape Safety

When someone hears safety in the landscape usually the first thing that comes to mind is leaves of three, or poison ivy. Poisonous plants are something to be concerned about but they are not the only danger in your yard. Plants and structures that provide poor visibility, trees that may pose a threat to a home, and plants that may be harmful to children or animals are all possible dangers in your home landscape. The following will describe dangers to look out for and preventative measures that can be taken to keep your yard safe.

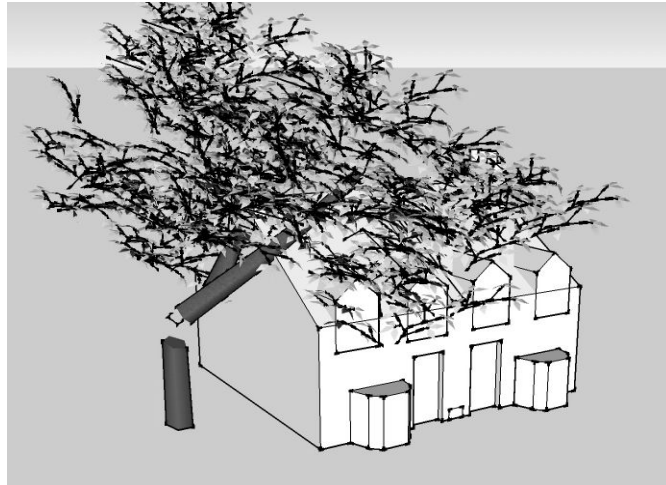
Plants such as shrubs and trees are often planted around the home to provide shade, ornamental value, and most of all privacy. The common misconception is that if no one can see my property or inside my home then my family and property are safe. Knowing that they cannot be seen from the road or by neighbors, criminals are more likely to target your property rather than a property that is well lit and visible to the public. If a criminal cannot be seen by neighbors or local law enforcement they can easily break into your home and make an easy escape. Large shrubs and trees in certain locations can also provide hiding spots for criminals to wait and surprise their victims. However, planting shrubs like Barberry, which can hurt to the touch, in areas under easily accessible windows and near entrances can deter would be criminals from entering your residence uninvited.

Large unmanaged shrubs near entrances to driveways can also prove harmful blocking views both in and out of residences. Without a clear view of the road one might easily back out or pull into oncoming traffic. The same view blocking the road may block a clear view into a driveway where kids may be playing, so keep views in and out of properties clear to provide safe lines of sight.



Large trees that have been a staple of your landscape for years should be accessed from time to time for any defects or potential for failure. A tree that is in decline may appear to be

structurally sound, but if the trees root system has failed the weight of the trees canopy may cause the tree to uproot itself and cause damage to your property. Large dead limbs should also be pruned from trees that are still structurally sound to reduce the risk of personal injury. These limbs are commonly referred to as widow makers, any loose overhead debris such as limbs or tree tops that may fall at any time, creating an extreme danger of injury to the public. A tree inventory should be conducted every couple of years on large trees showing signs of decline, removing any trees or limbs that are considered dangerous.



When replacing trees that have failed on your property careful selection of a replacement tree is vital to prevent future problems. Choose a replacement tree that will not pose as large of a threat as the previous tree, avoiding extremely tall trees, trees with poor branch structure, short life spans, and trees with narrow crotches.

The most common dangers found in your outdoor areas are poisonous and hazardous plants. Poisonous plants may not only be a danger to adults and children but pets as well. Common plants that can pose a threat to humans are mushrooms, like the false Morel, that people eat without making sure they are not poisonous. Never eat a wild mushroom without making one hundred percent sure that is an edible mushroom. Consuming poisonous mushroom can cause extreme sickness and even death. Other plants commonly found in home gardens like “Bittersweet” Nightshade, Foxglove, and Yews are also poisonous to humans when the fruit or plant itself is consumed. Azaleas, Rhododendrons, and Laurel are toxic to both humans and pets, but are most often consumed mistakenly by pets.

Many outdoor plants are harmful to the touch and do not need to be consumed to be hazardous. Poison Ivy, Poison Oak, Poison Sumac, and Giant Hogweed are common plants that only require touch to be exposed to their toxicity. Poison Ivy and Poison Oak are identified by their leaves of three structures, “Leaves of Three let them be”, but it best to become familiar to all the moderately poisonous plants because even the most experienced home gardener can easily overlook common hazardous plants. For more information on your home landscape or general horticulture questions, contact your local Cornell University Cooperative Extension office. In Cattaraugus County, contact Kabel Kellogg in the Ellicottville office at 716-699-2377, ext. 125 or e-mail [kck57@cornell.edu](mailto:kck57@cornell.edu).