



# **Tree Trimming Practices**

*For transmission and  
distribution power lines*

# Right Tree. Right Place.

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*CenterPoint Energy encourages you to plant the “Right Tree in the Right Place” by thinking about the mature height of a tree and its distance from power lines before planting.*

## **CenterPoint Energy’s tree trimming practices: Preventing power outages**

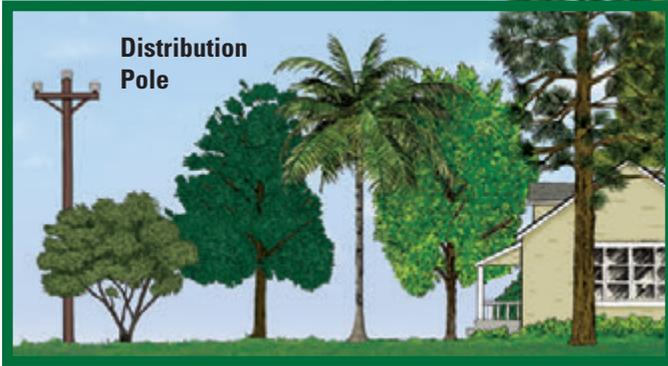
We are dedicated to bringing our customers reliable, safe and efficient electrical service. Our professional tree trimming program is integrated into our daily operations to help make this possible. Trees that grow close to CenterPoint Energy’s electrical poles and lines will be trimmed by a professional tree trimming company under contract with CenterPoint Energy. Tall-growing trees will be removed from high-voltage transmission line rights-of-way.

Houston and the surrounding areas are fortunate to have a climate that supports a long growing season and a wide variety of trees, which can provide beauty and shade for a home. Trees also serve as a habitat for wildlife and can help homeowners save on energy through shade. However, trees left to grow unmanaged not only can diminish in beauty but also can cause power outages and electrical safety hazards.

We’ve designed this brochure to answer questions you might have regarding our tree trimming activities. Please keep this brochure handy as it contains several useful phone numbers and emergency contacts.

## Distribution vs. Transmission

It's important to distinguish between higher-voltage transmission lines, which are generally located on large steel towers or poles within rights-of-way owned by CenterPoint Energy, and comparatively lower-voltage distribution lines, which are usually on wooden poles along roadways or in easements along property lines. Much greater clearance from trees is needed for high-voltage transmission lines than for distribution lines.



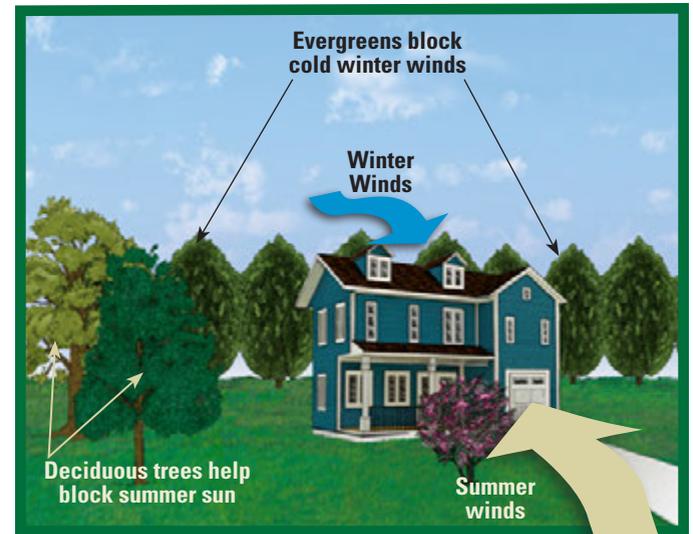
## Why plant trees?

Trees and shrubs can shade homes or offices from both direct and reflected sunlight to help keep them cool and energy-efficient. Also, trees can help reduce the velocity of wind striking the outside walls of your house to help moderate temperature fluctuations.

## What role do trees play in energy efficiency?

Trees planted strategically on the west, south and east sides of the home can significantly reduce cooling expenses. Deciduous trees shade in summer months and allow sunshine through to warm in the winter.

Evergreen trees on the windward side of the home act as a windbreak and can significantly reduce heating expenses during cold months.



## What do I need to do before planting new trees?

Before you plant, be aware of the location of any utility lines, including those underground. To locate underground lines such as electric, cable, telephone and gas lines, “Call Before You Dig” at **811** nationwide. Please call at least two business days before you plan to dig.

Also, know the growth potential of your trees and place them an appropriate distance from residential power distribution lines (see diagram). For an approved list of compatible vegetation, please visit [www.CenterPointEnergy.com/trees](http://www.CenterPointEnergy.com/trees) or call CenterPoint Energy at 713-207-2222 or 1-800-332-7143, and a company forester will be notified to assist you.

Planting the right tree in the right place, away from power lines, will help replenish local urban forests with quality trees and reduce CenterPoint Energy’s need to trim or remove trees.

Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.

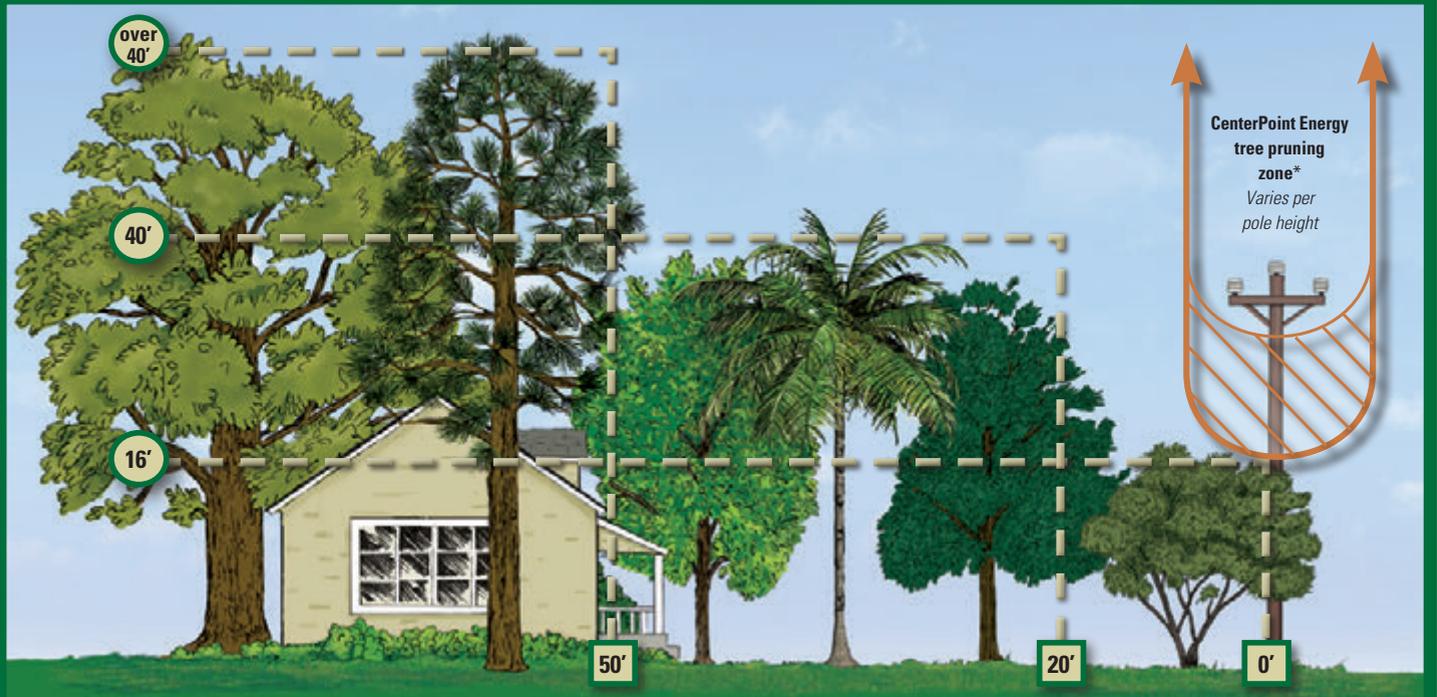


## How can I avoid having trees trimmed or removed because of power lines?

The best way to avoid conflicts is to never plant trees underneath power lines. When high-voltage transmission lines are nearby (see p. 15), never plant a tree within or directly adjacent to the transmission line right-of-way. Instead, choose low-growing ground covers, decorative plants and shrubs to avoid any conflict with the transmission lines as the plants grow to maturity. Any vegetation or trees that interfere with the safe operation, maintenance, or construction of a transmission line are subject to removal under the terms of the land rights granted to the company.

If you choose to plant trees near your home, plant the “Right Tree in the Right Place.” Select trees that have a short height at maturity and a crown spread that will not interfere with nearby power distribution lines. Proper selection and placement of trees can eliminate potential safety hazards, reduce expenses, improve service reliability and enhance the landscape’s appearance.

## Safe planting distance for trees near distribution lines



- – Mature height of tree
- – Planting distance from power line

## Safe planting distance for trees near power lines

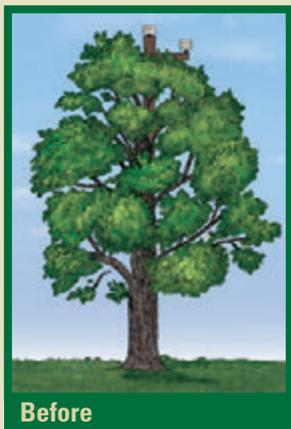
*\*Do NOT attempt to trim trees near power lines.*

## If I plant a tree too close to power lines, will it be cut down?

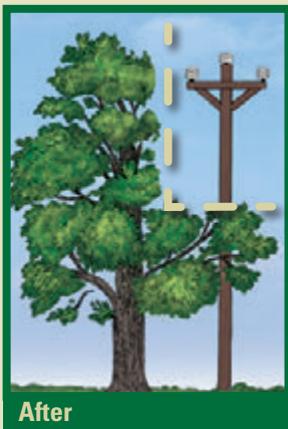
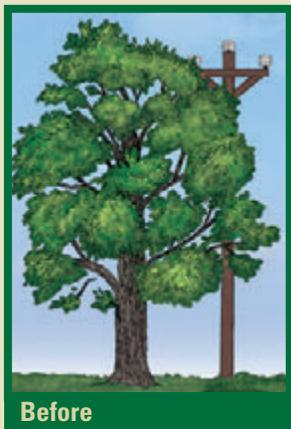
The vast majority of trees that CenterPoint Energy maintains near distribution lines in mostly residential areas are only trimmed. Trees growing under or near distribution lines and electrical equipment are typically trimmed to provide adequate clearance for sustained service reliability. Trees affecting distribution lines may be removed when necessary to eliminate hazards to the lines, address imminent safety concerns or for other issues.

## What will my trimmed tree look like?

### V-trimming around distribution lines



### Side-trimming around distribution lines



## How are trees trimmed?

Trees are trimmed according to the American National Standards Institute A300 Pruning Standards, which are utility trimming standards accepted by the National Arbor Day Foundation, the International Society of Arboriculture and other tree care organizations.

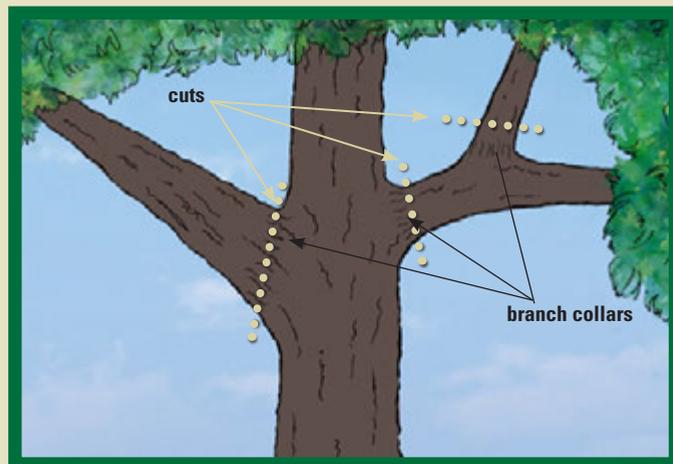
The standards include use of natural lateral or directional trimming methods that promote growth of the tree away from the electrical facilities. These trimming methods ideally allow a tree to retain as much of its natural form as possible while requiring less trimming in the future.

## Will the trees ever regain a natural appearance?

The trees will continue to grow, but they will not look the same as before they were trimmed. Because trees and power lines are not compatible, CenterPoint Energy will continue to trim as necessary in the future to maintain clearance for service reliability. Allowing the trees to grow naturally could create problems with the delivery of electrical service. However, CenterPoint Energy does use natural trimming methods to minimize the impact of the work.

## Will the trees die?

Trees are trimmed to cause the least possible stress to the tree. Proper trimming methods are used to minimize the impact on a tree's health, structure, and appearance. For example, when limbs are removed, they are cut at the branch collar, which reduces the likelihood of disease or decay entering the tree and excessive re-sprouting.



### **If a fruit or pecan tree is currently bearing fruit or nuts, can you wait until the fruit ripens or the nuts drop before trimming the tree?**

CenterPoint Energy will, if requested, wait to trim a specific tree until after the nuts drop or the fruit ripens unless the tree poses an immediate service problem. Please contact the contract tree crew or call CenterPoint Energy at 713-207-2222 or 1-800-332-7143.

### **Can I request trimming if my trees are close to power lines?**

Yes, if you feel your trees are too close to any electrical facility, we encourage you to call CenterPoint Energy to request tree trimming. A representative from CenterPoint Energy will inspect the tree to determine if it requires trimming immediately. If the tree does not create an obvious hazard or service reliability problem, CenterPoint Energy may defer maintenance until area-wide trimming is done in the future.

### **What if I want a live tree cut down instead of trimmed?**

CenterPoint Energy may cut down trees that are close to its power lines based on factors such as the types of equipment affected, the type of tree, its growth rate, its appearance after normal line clearance maintenance, size, health, ongoing line clearance requirements, etc. The tree crew leader, supervisor or a CenterPoint Energy forester will determine whether or not a tree should be removed.

When a hardwood tree is removed, CenterPoint Energy contractors will apply a herbicide to the stump to ensure that the tree's root system will not re-sprout. State and federal regulatory agencies have approved all herbicides utilized by CenterPoint Energy contract crews. All CenterPoint Energy contract crews have been trained to handle and apply herbicides properly. For additional information on herbicide usage on or around CenterPoint Energy facilities, please call CenterPoint Energy at 713-207-2222 or 1-800-332-7143, and a company forester will be notified to assist you.

### **Will you also cut down dead trees?**

If a dead tree is posing a threat to CenterPoint Energy's electrical equipment, the company will cut down the tree at no expense to the landowner. However, the property owner is responsible for disposing of the wood left on-site. Remember, never attempt to remove any tree next to a power line yourself – call CenterPoint Energy for assistance at 713-207-2222 or 1-800-332-7143.

### **How long do I have to wait for the debris to be cleaned up from my property?**

Under normal daily operations, tree trimming debris should be removed from your property on the same day the work is performed. Occasionally it may be left overnight and removed the next morning but only after the contractor has properly notified the property owner and/or received his/her consent.

Please note, however, that property owners, not CenterPoint Energy, are responsible for clearing debris resulting from emergency tree trimming for service restoration caused by fallen/broken trees, following routine inclement weather, or in the immediate aftermath of a major storm or other natural disaster.

### **How much does tree trimming cost?**

CenterPoint Energy does not charge for typical tree trimming service performed on its existing electrical facilities. It provides this service to help ensure reliable delivery of power. If a CenterPoint Energy contractor requests payment for this service, you should notify CenterPoint Energy immediately.

**(Note:** CenterPoint Energy may charge individuals or developers for tree clearing to help facilitate new service construction in certain situations which would be agreed upon prior to construction.)

### **Do you trim trees away from phone, TV, or DSL lines?**

No. CenterPoint Energy does not trim or remove trees away from telephone, DSL, or cable television wires. We also do not trim or remove trees that interfere with the electric service lines running from CenterPoint Energy's electric distribution lines to customers' meters unless the trees are causing or will soon cause damage to the service lines.

### Does CenterPoint Energy trim trees or vegetation away from street lights or security lights to improve visibility?

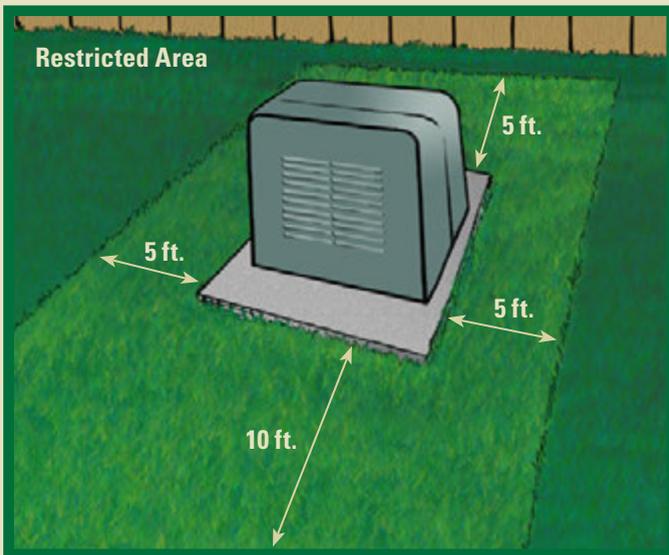
No. CenterPoint Energy will not trim trees or vegetation from around, above, or below street or security lighting facilities to maintain or improve visibility.

CenterPoint Energy will trim trees or vegetation from around, above, or below street and security lights when the tree or vegetation is causing or will soon cause damage to street or security light assets, including the light fixture, secondary conductors, and/or attached facilities.

Customers requesting trimming of vegetation from around, above, or below street or security lights must contact the entity with territorial jurisdiction over the lighted area (road right-of-way, park, hike & bike trail etc.), such as the municipality, county, State of Texas, or homeowners or property owners association.

### Can I plant trees near underground transformer boxes?

Avoid planting vegetation around electric transformer boxes used with underground power lines. Allow at least 10 feet of access in front of the transformer and five feet around the sides and back.



### Does CenterPoint Energy trim vines on utility poles or guy wires?

Vines on poles and guy wires will be cut at or close to ground level and left to deteriorate and fall later. Vines that are cut may be treated with herbicides to prevent re-growth.

### Can I trim my trees around the power lines in my yard?

No! Serious injury or death can occur when untrained homeowners or workers attempt to trim trees around energized power lines. By law, unless you coordinate with CenterPoint Energy to do the work safely, only professionals who are authorized by the local electric utility are allowed to trim or remove trees next to energized power lines. These professionals have been properly trained and equipped to work safely around power lines.

## Why can't palm trees be pruned like other trees?

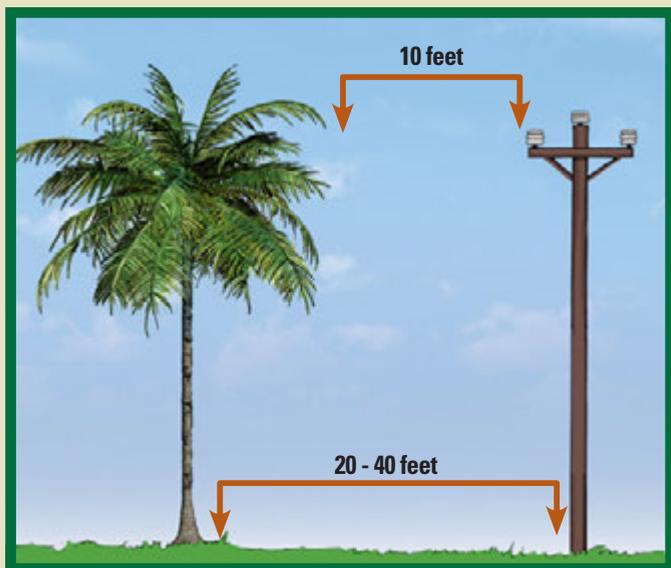
Unlike other trees, palms grow in a straight, vertical line, with a single growing point at the top of the tree. This is also true for a number of other tropical species. Because of this single-growth point, normal pruning techniques are not necessarily effective. Palms also can often regenerate fronds in a few short months, well before the utility's next scheduled maintenance. This rapid growth cycle creates a repeated hazard when palms – which are extremely flammable – are located too close to power lines.

## Where should I plant my palm?

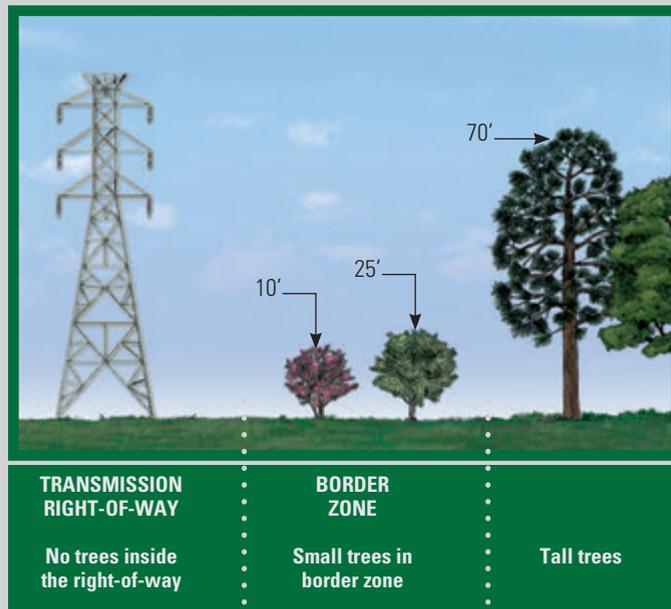
If you choose to include palm trees in your landscape, CenterPoint Energy recommends a planting distance of 20 - 40 feet to reduce the risk of windblown fronds contacting power lines. Consumers should plant palm trees far enough away from power lines that no part of the tree ever grows within 10 feet of the line.

## Will my palm be removed if it is too close to a power line?

It is often necessary for CenterPoint to top or remove a palm tree that is inappropriately located. When the company removes a palm tree, we will cut it off as close to the ground as practical. The stump will not be ground or removed. Before a palm tree grows to within 10 feet of power lines, the owner has the option of relocating the tree.



## Plant trees away from high-voltage transmission lines



## Can I plant trees near power transmission lines?

No. It's important to distinguish between higher-voltage transmission lines, which are generally located on large steel towers or poles within rights-of-way owned by CenterPoint Energy, and comparatively lower-voltage distribution lines, which are usually on wooden poles along roadways or in easements along property lines. Much greater clearance from trees is needed for high-voltage transmission lines than for distribution lines.

CenterPoint Energy's large transmission conductors serve numerous industrial, commercial and residential customers. If a tree makes contact with a transmission line, service to thousands of homes and businesses may be interrupted. Hazardous current may travel down the tree, into the ground, and across local underground cables and pipes causing severe damage to public and private property. To prevent this hazardous situation and ensure safety and reliability, tall-growing trees within the transmission right-of-way will be removed.

In short, you should plant trees away from high-voltage transmission lines.

## Can I plant trees in an open area inside a transmission line right-of-way?

No. Transmission line rights-of-way are dynamic: they change over time with the construction of new lines and rebuilding or reconfiguration of existing lines. Thus, trim-ming requirements may also change over time.

Open space inside a transmission line right-of-way is reserved for future transmission and distribution lines that will require the trees to be removed in any case.

## How does CenterPoint Energy determine if trees need to be removed from areas bordering transmission rights-of-way or merely trimmed?

The decision to remove a tree depends on several factors:

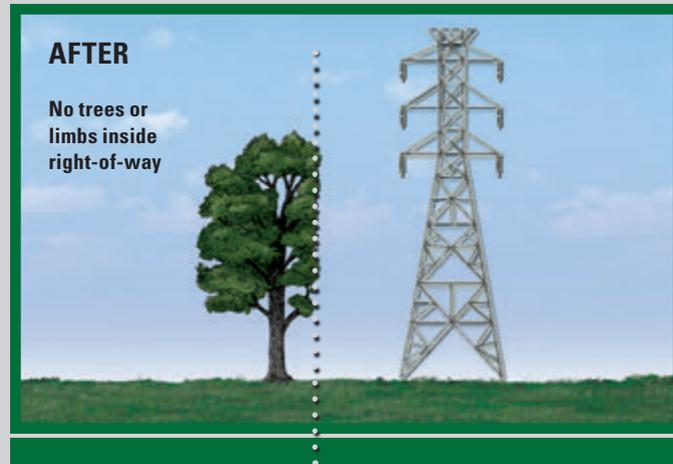
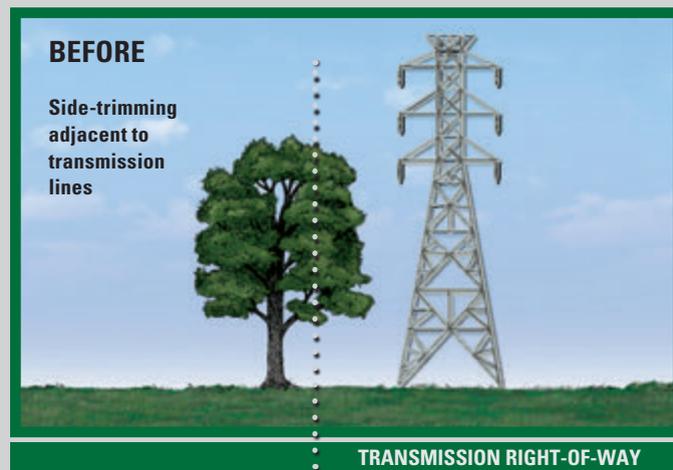
- The voltage of the power lines,
- The proximity of the tree to the wires and
- The health of the tree.

CenterPoint Energy works continuously to remove all trees and vegetation that will at some time interfere with the safe, reliable operation of its transmission lines. Our purpose is to produce a predictable environment of low-growing vegetation within our transmission line corridors according to the utility model recognized by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

CenterPoint Energy inspects and maintains its transmission rights-of-way and transmission line vegetation growth on a five-year cycle, which means that 20 percent of the circuits/lines have trees removed or trimmed annually. CenterPoint Energy makes an annual aerial inspection of the rights-of-way to identify trees that are dead, dying or compromised in such a way that they may fall onto an adjacent transmission line.

Since such trees are usually located outside the right-of-way, CenterPoint Energy attempts to obtain landowner permission to remove these trees before they fall. Branches that overhang into CenterPoint Energy's right-of-way may be trimmed rather than removing the entire tree.

## What does a tree trimmed away from a transmission line look like?



## Who can I talk to if I have more questions?

If you have questions or would like information on appropriate trees or shrubs to plant, please call CenterPoint Energy at 713-207-2222 or 1-800-332-7143, and a company forester will be notified to assist you.

Know what's below.  
**Call before you dig.**



*Before planting a tree, call the "Call Before You Dig" nationwide phone line at 811 to safely locate underground utility lines, such as electric, cable, telephone and gas lines. Please call at least two business days before you plan to dig.*

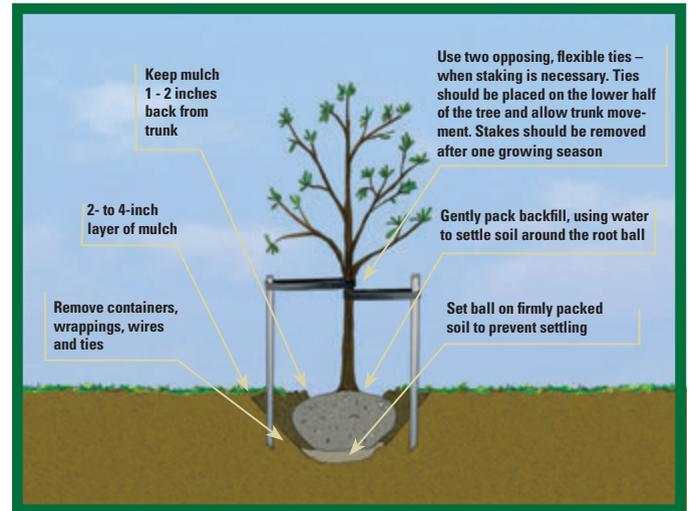
## Planting your tree

Before planting your tree, look up to be sure you are planting at a safe distance away from power lines. Begin by making the hole at least two to three times the diameter of and slightly shallower than the root ball or container. This should position the trunk flare slightly above the original soil level. Inspect the root ball while gently sliding the tree from the container and cut or remove any circling roots.

Place the tree in the hole and make sure the tree is plumb and straight. Fill the hole about one-third full and gently but firmly pack the soil around the base of the root ball. Fill the remainder of the hole, taking care to firmly pack soil to eliminate air pockets.

Stake the tree with flexible ties on the lower half of the tree, if necessary. Mulch the base of the tree with a 2- to 4-inch layer. When placing mulch, be sure that the actual trunk of the tree is not covered to avoid decay of the living bark at the base of the tree.

Keep soil moist but not soaked, watering trees at least once a week or more frequently during hot weather.



## Electric Service

If you see a downed power line, need to report a street light outage or have problems with your electric service, call CenterPoint Energy at **713-207-2222** or **1-800-332-7143**. We own and maintain the power lines and restore your electricity when it goes out. Your retail electric provider contracts with us to deliver electricity to you over our power lines.

If you have a question about your electric bill or want your meter read, call your retail electric provider. Their customer service number is on your electric bill. CenterPoint Energy does not sell electricity or send you an electric bill, but your electric provider does contract with us to read your meter for them.

## Natural Gas Service

If you need help with your natural gas service, have questions about your natural gas bill or want information on the benefits of dependable, affordable natural gas, call CenterPoint Energy at **713-659-2111** or **1-800-752-8036**. We sell natural gas, own and maintain the natural gas lines, and handle all natural gas bill inquiries.

If you smell natural gas in your home or business, leave your home or business immediately, and then call CenterPoint Energy at **713-659-2111** or **1-888-876-5786**.

*[CenterPointEnergy.com/trees](http://CenterPointEnergy.com/trees)*



Always There.®