

The Danger of Bradford Pears

Bradford Pears:

Bradford Pear or *Pyrus calleryana* 'Bradford' is a cultivar of the Callery pear that is widely used in landscape residential developments, parking lots, and roadsides. While the Bradford Pear has great ornamental qualities the safety hazards outweigh the showy white flowers in the spring and red to orange-red fall color. (1)

The Dangers of the Bradfords:

The Bradford Pear exhibits rapid growth, 12-15 feet increase in a span of 8-10 years, and has a short to moderate life span of 25 to 30 years.(1) Bradford Pears suffer from severe branch

splitting, which occurs because their wood is brittle and splits apart easily. Issues also arise with branch structure, the tight branch angles make them prone to splitting. Often an entire quarter or half section of a tree breaks off. This can create a dangerous situation, especially in a street tree planting. (2) Frequently the breakage is caused by strong wind in summer storms blowing against the very dense, upright foliage. Sometimes, however, the trees break apart simply under their own weight with no wind involved at all.(2) Bradford Pears are also invasive, originating from China, the tree is aggressive and invades disturbed areas and displaces native plant communities. (3)

Take Action:

We recommend the removal and replacement of all Bradford Pear trees on your property. The trees bring with them a major safety concern due to their weak branches and frequency of splitting. For more information or to discuss your concerns and create a plan of action, please contact your Chapel Valley Property Manager.

What Others Have Been Saying:

University of Maryland Extension Service

“When a Bradford pear is severely damaged it is best to cut it down. If it is older, perhaps it’s a good idea to consider removing it before a problem occurs. It can be replaced with a similar-looking, improved cultivar of pear. Over time, unforeseen problems developed with Bradford pears. As the trees aged and reached maturity of 10 to 15 years, they started breaking apart.

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Alabama Cooperative Extension Agency

“Despite their standing as one the most popular landscape trees in the southeast, Bradford Pears aren’t what they’re cracked up to be. For despite all the beauty they lend to thousands of landscapes throughout the region, the trees are plagued with one fatal flaw: due to their vigorous growth, weak wood and poor branch structure, they often begin falling apart after only 20 years.” (4)

NC State University

“The trouble with Bradfords is the weak limb structure. Narrow angles on any tree where the limbs attach will create weak limbs. Bark is included inside the fork and the limb gets weaker as it gets older. After a few years, a windstorm can split out the limbs. On Bradford pears, the split limb may be most of the trunk. Several buds break at the same place. The resulting limb structure is terrible.” (4)

1. [Invasive.org](#) -Joint project of USDA Forest Service and University of Georgia
2. [University of Maryland Extension](#)
3. [NC State University Cooperative Extension](#)
4. [Lazy S'S Farm and Nursery](#)

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