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## In Montclair: branches and debris and logs, oh my!

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2012

BY GWEN OREL

STAFF WRITER

THE MONTCLAIR TIMES

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Trees provide shelter from the sun, homes for birds, and striking scenery. After Hurricane Sandy hit, fallen trees also created a big headache.

Cleanup of the tree debris is still going on. Many township trees succumbed to winds that reached speeds of nearly 90 miles per hour. Sandy left many [Montclairites](#) wondering: what

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Ed Koch, former New York City mayor, was a

will happen to the tree canopy?

## THE DAMAGE

The number of downed trees is high. Township Manager Marc Dashield issued a memorandum last week stating that there have been 42 reports of trees falling onto homes, and a total



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STAFF PHOTO BY ADAM ANIK

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During a recent meeting of the [Montclair](#) Environmental Commission, municipal Community Services Director Steve Wood estimated that Montclair has lost up to 180 township trees during the storm.

This past Tuesday, amid falling snow, municipal Arborist Stephen Schuckman observes that the narrow roots of this oak tree in Edgemont Memorial Park cannot support the tree when buffeted by the fast winds of a storm like Sandy.

Some of the trees that were felled were healthy, Wood said. "There were evergreens uprooted. Other trees just shattered. The wind uprooted the trees out of the soil, Wood remarked.

The damage, municipal Arborist Stephen Schuckman told [The Montclair Times](#), was unusual, because Sandy was an unusual storm. Large trees have narrow roots that hold them up, Schuckman explained, and the high winds snapped some of those roots like rubber bands.

"I come from the Midwest, and grew up where there were tornadoes. I know big storms," he affirmed. "Technically this storm was declassified as a hurricane, but there were sustained winds for many hours. At this time of year, the trees are going dormant, and they are still full of water, so they weigh an awful lot. When there is a strong wind pushing on them for hours and hours at a time, some will uproot. That's nature."

## THE CLEANUP

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**Time:** 12:00PM

**Speakers**  
**June Halper, MSN, ANP, FAAN**  
Executive Director  
**Terence McHale, PT, DPT, OCS, MSCS**  
Physical Therapy Coordinator

**Sparta Feb 9**

Dashield's memorandum notes that overtime costs to handle the damage created by Sandy have totaled \$395,353 so far. The township has also spent \$32,203 to pay outside contractors for debris removal and "sheltering supplies."

The cleanup, Wood told the commission, is happening in stages. First, the township is collecting brush and debris from private homes, then tree parts that are up to 10 inches in diameter. Stumps on private homes, Wood noted, are the homeowner's responsibility. From public property, the crews are also picking up the brush first, continuing with logs or downed trees, and then stumps. After that, the township will begin cleaning the parks, Wood said.

One difference in this year's cleanup from earlier storms, observed Wood, is that the township is stockpiling debris, including wood chips, in staging areas around town. The disposal of the waste will be at [Montclair's](#) expense.

The township expects to receive reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Wood said, to reimburse the township for the cleanup.

"For now the town has to spend its own money," said Schuckman, noting that some of the logs have been as heavy as five tons.

#### THE FUTURE

[Montclair's](#) new shade tree ordinance, which requires residents either to replant a tree if they remove a sizable shade tree on their property, or to pay into a shade tree replanting fund, was to have gone into effect on Nov. 1, but Sandy pushed it back until Jan. 1. The delay, said Wood, will give people "a chance to get through the chaos." The ordinance does not require residents to replant healthy trees that came down in the storm. Township residents will be able to consult a list of suggested trees to replant provided by Schuckman.

[Montclair's](#) annual replanting budget is usually \$150,000, Wood said.

The storm pushed back the planting of trees that would have occurred during this autumn, noted Schuckman. Instead, he said, there will be a double planting in the spring of up to 300

trees.

Small ornamental trees will be planted under the power lines and in business districts, while large shade trees will be planted where power lines and space permit, according to the arborist.

Although some residents have expressed fear of trees falling near their homes, Schuckman said that the town "does not remove healthy trees.

"Storms are beyond our control. If we reacted that way because a tree might fall in the future, we would have no trees."

Residents may also request a tree to be replanted if one has come down near them, Schuckman affirmed. In addition to planting trees on the belt of the sidewalk, the township will replant a shade tree on a resident's front lawn by request, he explained. That tree would then become the resident's responsibility to maintain.

For Third Ward Township Councilman Sean Spiller, the benefits of [Montclair's](#) tree canopy, which attract people to move here, outweigh the risks.

"It is more of a concern that we aren't planting trees fast enough," Spiller declared.

"Once the immediate reaction to the storm wears off, most of us will go back to the idea that trees are an important thing to have in [Montclair](#)."

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