***The Harbor Ridge Homeowner***

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**Fall and winter Thoughts**

Summer regrettably largely disappeared with the recent downpours. Dreary days, early sunsets and late sunrises will soon follow. The days of making sure you add Prestone to the radiator are long gone, but checking your residence in preparation for another Northwest fall and winter is not. Additional thoughts that very likely might impact you are addressed below.

Roof leaks are the pits! Not only do they ruin your day, they ruin the roof and the inside of your house at the same time! For those of us with cedar shake roofs, take a look to make sure there are none missing. The ridge cap, the shakes running along the top of the roof, is especially important. Make sure no ridge-cap pieces are missing! A repair at this time would be relatively inexpensive; a repair in the aftermath of a storm would not . . .

Gutters are another important part of your roof-system. If they fill with water and overflow, some maintenance is needed to get the water flowing through the downspout again. There is a possibility of a gutter ripping off the edge of the roof if it is full of water. The longer the gutter the more likely that will occur. Be sure to recheck gutters once the leaves quit falling . . .

Most of us look forward to having landscape chores taper off! Unfortunately, some foliage still blocks sidewalks and driver’s views of oncoming traffic. Rain mostly keeps our children and grandchildren from playing in the streets but they will be queuing up for the school bus in the dark and returning home in the gloom. Scads of kids will be on our streets and sidewalks on All Hallows Eve. Please think ‘***SAFETY***’ and trim any offending foliage on your property.

Another aspect of fall for those lucky enough to have fruit bearing trees on their property is harvest! If you leave for vacation in sunny, warm, places, do have someone harvest for you. Fruit left on trees fall . . . during fall. If the fruit is not picked up and properly dealt with, raccoons, mice, and worst of all ***RATS*** will visit to help clean up.

Rats will not stop with just the fruit lying on the ground; they will take up residence around, under, or in your house. They like to be warm and comfortable at your expense. Rats’ teeth grow so fast they must constantly chew, or gnaw to stay alive. One of their favorite treats is the wiring inside or under your house. Imagine what happens if that causes an electrical short! Ask your neighbor at 4302 Cliff Side Dr. or those near the recently burned-down house on Browns Point Blvd. about electrical shorts . . .

Another unwanted predator is indirectly drawn into our neighborhoods by fruit not harvested and consequently left lying on the ground. ***COYOTES!***  They love mice and rats. They also like cats and small dogs. A quick Google search of Coyotes in NE Tacoma will yield SEVERAL interesting articles. The article featuring Meeker Middle School is especially disquieting . . .

Varmints drawn to fallen fruit cause all sorts of headaches but fruit lying on neighborhood sidewalks pose another danger. Fallen fruit may cause someone to slip or fall. Even though the City owns the sidewalk the homeowner is responsible for the maintenance. That means a slip or fall on the sidewalk you are responsible for may cause financial distress in the form of medical bills or lawsuit.

While your association maintains some control over landscaping, and in particular trees in our neighborhoods, some confusion may remain about what is and what is not acceptable within the scope of our CC&R (Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions) regulations. All residents are bound to abide by the CC&Rs when they have purchased or reside in a home within our community; it benefits all when everyone makes an effort to comply, preferably without coercion.

‘Native’ Trees …. that were here when this community was platted about thirty years ago, and that still remain, may be removed once permission has been granted by the Home Owners Association’s ACC. Trees planted by either you or your predecessor homeowner(s), on the other hand, may be removed at your discretion, without permission (other than perhaps from your husband or wife).

**Landscape Standards – Yours, the City of Tacoma’s, and Ours**

Driving through our Harbor Ridge neighborhood, you’ll see a pleasant variety in the approaches individual homeowners have chosen for their landscape. Your Covenants define only some broad guidelines, addressing the care for your lawns and grounds, being considerate of your neighbors, and the like.

Our City, however, does have some very specific requirements, largely addressing safety, that affect each homeowner’s interface with city property, specifically the streets and sidewalks abutting your property.

The City has defined those requirements in its Ordinances, summarized in a small pamphlet we recently passed out selectively in our neighborhood. Most of our homeowners are doing well in abiding by the requirements, among which are:

* Keeping vegetation under control near intersections and driveways for reasons of visibility affecting pedestrian and driver traffic safety,
* Keeping the full width of the sidewalk and street clear of vegetation and debris,
* Assuring that raised beds be set back from the sidewalk, and
* Providing a required 8- foot minimum clearance for trees overhanging the sidewalk.