Call before you dig

Do your garden and landscape projects include digging, planting a tree, installing a new mailbox or bringing in a backhoe for trench work? Underground utilities, such as buried gas, water and electric lines, can be a shovel thrust away from turning a summer project into a disaster.

Dial 8-1-1 the national “Call Before You Dig” phone number, at least 72 hours before digging or excavation work. Your call will be routed to a local “one call” center. Tell the operator where you’re planning to dig and what type of work you will be doing and local utilities will be notified.

A locator will arrive to mark the approximate location of any underground lines, pipes and cables with flags or marking paint so you’ll know what’s below. Then safe digging can begin.

It’s free!

It’s easy!

It’s the law!

Residential Planting Guide

Putting in some new landscaping or trees this year? Or perhaps planning your garden?

Here are some tips to keep you safe around electricity.
Landscaping around electricity

As you plan your tree and landscape plantings, consider that trees and shrubs need space to grow both above and below ground. Reduce fire hazards, power outages and the need for frequent pruning with proper selection and planting of trees near utilities. Trees can help cool your home, break cold winds to lower your heating costs and provide food for wildlife. Properly placed trees can lower line clearance costs for utility companies, reduce tree mortality and result in healthier community forests.

In our part of the country, we use dense windbreaks to protect homes from harsh winter winds. Winter sun should be able to reach south-facing windows. Refer to this helpful graphic to determine which species to plant in various locations on your property:

Tall trees surrounding your home, such as maple, oak, elm, pine and spruce, provide summer shade to lower cooling costs and keep out cold winter winds. Medium trees, 40 feet or less in mature height, include hawthorn, pagoda dogwood, serviceberry, star magnolia and Amur maple, while smaller trees suitable for planting near distribution utility lines might include crab apple, sumac, burning bush, winterberry, dwarf Alberta spruce or dwarf Serbian spruce.

Yard and garden safety

Use only electric appliances marked for outdoor use for cutting the lawn, trimming the bushes and flowers and cutting tree limbs. Practice these safety precautions when you work with electric appliances outside of the home:

- Always look up for nearby power lines before you cut down any tree or trim branches. If a tree falls into a power line, contact your electric co-op.
- Keep areas around electric meters, transformers or other electrical equipment free of any vegetation that could limit utility service access.
- If you have trees that appear to be growing into or leaning toward power lines, contact your electric utility. Never try to prune them yourself.
- Place waterproof covers on all outdoor outlets.
- Never touch a person or an object that has made contact with a power line.

For more safety information, visit www.SafeElectricity.org.