

Root Problems: 3 Native Dallas Trees a Threat to Sewer Lines

Mexican sycamore, cedar elm species among riskiest trees for residential sewer damage

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Sycamores, elms and pecans. These tree species are as symbolic of North Texas as cowboy hats and bluebonnets- but new data reveals they're quietly responsible for some of Dallas' most persistent sewer problems.

A study conducted by local Master Plumbers reviewed the tree species most commonly responsible for sewer line repairs in the DFW Metroplex. Their findings reveal surprising data about the damage caused by some of North Texas' most recognizable- and beloved- species.

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We're seeing local sycamores and some Live oak roots that just don't die from [chemical treatments] anymore."

Steven Smith, Responsible Master Plumber, Mother Modern Plumbing

The staff at [Mother Modern Plumbing](#) reviewed five years of internal sewer repair service data driven by root intrusions. This is when aggressive tree roots break through sewer pipes in search of nutrients and organic material.

"We get hundreds of sewer repair calls every year because of root intrusions," says Mother's Responsible Master Plumber Steven Smith. "We knew it was an issue- we didn't know how much our favorite trees were responsible."

Ranking Dallas' Most Aggressive Tree Roots

The tree species most responsible for root intrusions in home sewer lines is the Cedar Elm. As a



This massive root intrusion was pulled from a Dallas, TX home sewer line.

native local tree, its root system is incredibly hardy and thrives in shallow soil. During dry seasons, Cedar elm roots grow towards organic material inside sewer lines.

While Cedar elm roots drive the most sewer line repairs in Dallas, the Mexican Sycamore causes the most extensive damage. Its root systems grow fast and routinely grow 50-60 feet to reach cracks and loose joints in residential sewer pipes.

Pecan trees rank third on the list of DFW root intrusion offenders. Mature pecan trees have extensive lateral root systems that maintain thickness while growing sideways. Older homes with pecan trees in historic neighborhoods like University Park are at particular risk.

Historic DFW Neighborhoods and Root Intrusion Issues

In the historic neighborhoods of Dallas, many homes still rely on their original sewer lines. These pipes are typically made of clay or cast iron. These pipe materials are deprecated by today's standards.

"Cast iron pipes are expected to last 40-50 years, and clay even shorter," Smith explains. "We haven't used them since the 1970s- they're all outdated and breaking down."

After 50+ years in Lakewood and University Park soil, the joints that connect the pipe sections have failed. As the pipes pull apart at the joints, this creates small openings that leak water into the surrounding earth.

Once the roots find a gap in deprecated sewer pipes, they enter to reach the nutrients inside. Because these old materials cannot flex or expand, the intrusion leads to a total structural failure. In mature Dallas properties, the combination of outdated pipe materials and aggressive



Sewer camera footage of intrusive tree roots causing a blockage.



Hydro jetting is the most effective way to remove tree roots from Dallas pipes.

root systems makes subterranean damage almost inevitable.

Hydro Jetting + Sewer Repair as a Forever Fix

"Hydro jetting is the best sewer cleaning option for most root issues," Smith states. "You don't just blast the roots out of the pipe- you're also cleaning the internal pipe walls."

The [benefits of hydro jetting](#) for Dallas root intrusions are fast and measurable- but they aren't permanent. The cleaning process blasts out roots, but doesn't kill them. Chemical root treatments are popular, but becoming less effective as North Texas trees become more resistant to their active ingredients.

"We're seeing local sycamores and some Live oak roots that just don't die from the chemicals anymore," Smith reports.

After hydro jetting service, Smith recommends taking quick action to patch the pinholes and joint separations where tree roots invaded the sewer line. By replacing the damaged sections with Schedule 40 PVC, there are no gaps for roots to re-enter the pipe.

For local plumbers like Smith, it's the best-case scenario for Dallas homeowners.

"No one wants to kill trees they've owned for decades," he says. "And the new Schedule 40 PVC lasts over 50 years. Keep your tree, keep your pipes."

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About Mother Modern Plumbing

Mother Modern Plumbing provides residential plumbing services throughout the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, with extensive sewer cleaning and repair experience in historic Dallas neighborhoods. Mother's advanced suite of sewer diagnostic, cleaning and replacement services includes modern non-invasive electronic leak detection, hydro jetting and Schedule 40 PVC materials. Their tech-driven approach focuses on customized solutions for individual property owners. Learn more at callmother.com.

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