

# Storm has silver lining

With utility lines back in place following the worst ice storm since 1966, Oakland County residents are getting down to business restoring their properties. Those steps necessary to salvage wrecked trees and shrubs should be taken

as soon as possible and should be considered for federal income tax deductions, experts advise. The first step according to horticulturist Gregory Patchan, is to make a plant survey of the yard, noting

the damage each plant received. SAGGING LIMBS can be propped up to relieve the strain, he said, and shrubs that are breaking apart can be tied or wrapped.

Severely damaged trees will probably have to be removed. Fractured limbs should be cut at the main trunk. Broken limbs should be cut flush with the trunk and all wounds sealed with pruning paint. Failure to do this, Patchan explained, will result eventually in decay and further damage.

Wish bone splitting of major branches can be repaired by ridding and bracing while injured limbs on small trees and shrubs should be pruned back to the closest main branch.

Small trees or shrubs that have been partially uprooted should be repositioned and staked or girdled.

The damage from this storm may permanently disfigure some plants, but Mother Nature will heal most of the damage with our help, Patchan said.

At least some of the uninsured property losses caused by the storm may be recovered by taking them as federal income tax deductions, according to the Michigan Association of Certified Public Accountants.

DEDUCTIONS will apply on the 1975 tax returns unless any of the stricken areas are later classified by the federal government as disaster areas in which case the deductions may be included in 1975 returns.

Taxpayers who have already filed their 1975 returns have the option of submitting an amended return or including their losses next year on their 1976 return.

Casualty loss deductions listed in IRS Publication 547 are: (1) cost of removing destroyed or damaged trees and shrubs, minus the value of any salvage recovered.

(2) damage to buildings, bridges and other measures taken to preserve damaged trees and shrubs.

(3) replacement of trees and shrubs necessary to restore property to its approximate value before the casualty.

Photographs of pre and post damage areas should be submitted as documentation, as well as the damage survey the CPAs advise.

IF THE LOSS of trees and shrubs is substantial and property values are adversely affected, a qualified professional appraiser should be consulted before any casualty loss is claimed, according to R.E. Abbott, vice president of The Davis Tree Expert Co., with offices in Troy.

Only a professional appraiser's value will be accepted by the IRS, said Abbott.

Residents concerned about tree-clogged main roads will have to wait at least two months until all the trees in the right-of-way are cleared, according to John Grau, county road commissioner.

Commissioners have been praised for the way the board of road commissioners, which authorized that overtime be dropped March 6, cleaned up crews will work regular hours for the remaining work.



Storm damage can be deducted from federal income taxes.

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## County budget shows surplus

Oakland County balanced its budget in 1975 and managed to carry a \$21,800 surplus over into the 1976 budget, according to County Executive Daniel T. Murphy.

Murphy's report was accepted by the board of commissioners last week and the surplus was transferred to the contingency fund.

The year-end report shows that the county received \$34,140,404 in revenues and spent \$34,125,799. The surplus is equal to less than one per cent of total revenue.

Murphy gave credit for the balanced budget to an overtime control program which was instituted in the last quarter of the year. He stated that the program saved \$12,000 in overtime costs compared to the same period in 1974.

This and other cost-cutting programs are being continued and improved upon in this budget year, Murphy said, to insure that Oakland County government never has to be bailed out of a disastrous financial situation.

## Mitchell to speak to Sierra Club

Edward J. Mitchell, professor of business economics at the University of Michigan, will be the featured speaker at the March 31 general membership meeting of the Sierra Club's Detroit Group.

Legislative and outgoing reports will begin the meeting at 7 p.m. in the Science Museum auditorium of Cranbrook Institute of Science on Lane Place Road in Bloomfield Hills.

The meeting is open to the public. Mitchell will speak at 8 p.m. on "United States Energy Policy: Is There One?—The Hard Facts and Fringe Realities."

He is the author of books on U.S. energy policy.

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