

The Root Of The Problem cont..

also used to clean pipes. This system uses very high pressure water to cut the roots and to remove built up solids. This option is more expensive but it can handle larger roots and does not damage the pipes.

Once they have been cut new

“Removing the tree is often not a suitable alternative”

roots start to grow from the cut ends and it is only a matter of time before the roots have again blocked the pipes. Root cutting is only a temporary solution. It may be the cheapest option at that point in time but it will not solve the problem. If the faulty plumbing is not repaired then the problem will persist.

What to do?

Removing the tree is often not a suitable alternative because council consent may not be granted. In addition it is probably only a matter of time before the roots from another tree stumble across the leak. Furthermore there is often a statutory requirement for you to maintain your pipes in good working condition so the plumbing will need to be repaired regardless of whether the tree is retained or removed.

There are few options available

for repairing the plumbing depending on the site conditions and the location and extent of the problem. The simplest option may be to dig up the plumbing and to repair the pipes. Another option is to dig a long trench either end of the fault and use "pipe bursting" to replace the defective section. Often these options are not possible or suitable for a number of reasons such as :

- Buildings or other structures over the pipes or
- Digging would cause significant damage to the gardens or
- Trees would be severely damaged or would need to be removed
- There is no access for machinery and digging by hand would require too much labour
- The depth of excavation would require benching, shoring etc
- There are "T" or "Y" junctions in the portion needing to be repaired

In situations such as these the ideal situation is to have the pipes relined. This option involves using water jetting to cut the roots and clean the pipes. Once this is done then a liner is inserted and cured in situ forming a waterproof membrane.

On first impression there may be concerns as to how a thin "plastic" lining can be useful. If you recall root tips exert very little pressure and these resin linings are far stronger than a plastic film.

How about the tree?

A plumbing problem seldom persists long enough for the tree to become dependant on the leaking pipe. Once the leak is

stopped the stimulus is removed and localised root growth is returned to normal and is unable to enter the pipe.

Any of the above system will repair the fault. Cutting roots that have entered the pipe will not affect the health or stability of the tree. Cutting roots for trenching required to perform repairs however may cause significant harm or even cause structural instability of the tree. You may need consent from the local council and should seek advice from a consulting arborist if you are intending to excavate closer to a tree than 12 times its trunk diameter.

- Mark Hartley



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