

Plan well before planting trees

INCIDENTS of trees uprooting or branches breaking off and hitting and injuring people, as reported in "Fallen tree at KLCC injures two" (*The Star*, March 5), or damaging roads and properties, as occurred during the super storm in Penang in November last year, drive home the fact that planting of trees in housing and public areas requires more effort than just putting a sapling or seed on the ground.

This is because after they're planted, trees need constant care and maintenance (pruning of the branches, among others) and protection against disease.

For instance, when the trees reach maturity, residents would have to face huge fall-outs of leaves which need to be swept away on a daily basis.

In public parks and children's playgrounds, protruding roots of

mature trees will damage footpaths and concrete drains.

Tall trees also tend to attract lightning strikes, posing a danger to the public and damaging electrical household appliances.

Thus, it boggles the mind when trees are planted beside lamp posts or under electrical wiring in residential areas.

Residents associations often have to deal with incidents of branches collapsing over electrical or telephone lines, or blackouts due to water from the leaves of trees dripping onto the wiring system during a downpour.

While we appreciate the good intention behind creating green lungs in cities and residential areas, there is a need for the regulatory bodies to study the landscape before any tree-planting exercise is undertaken in these

areas. Residents must also be given an opportunity to provide feedback before trees are planted in their housing areas.

Ultimately, residents are the end users, so to speak, and they will have to live with the consequences in years to come.

It is very telling that the positioning and choice of trees are the least explored areas in the past, and this has raised concerns on the safety of the immediate surroundings, especially if the trees are huge.

It is most reassuring to know that most local councils have committed to hiring arborists who would be in the best position to determine the trees that are suitable for a certain area and managing the landscape as well.

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