

Vandals Attack N. Texas City's Trees

Red Oaks, Cedar Elms In Keller Damaged, Destroyed

POSTED: 1:58 pm CDT July 30, 2008
UPDATED: 6:14 pm CDT July 30, 2008

KELLER, Texas -- Vandals have damaged two trees and cut down two others in Keller city parks in recent weeks, hacking at them with a sharp object, city officials said.

Two red oaks at Bear Creek Park and two cedar elms at the Keller-Smithfield Activity Node were affected. The damage was discovered on July 20.

A red oak with a 7-inch diameter and a cedar elm that was 4 inches around were cut down. One of the trees cut down was donated by a parks employee, and city employees raised funds to pay to relocate the tree for a memorial to Mary Hightower, a longtime Parks and Recreation administrative secretary who died in October 2006.



"It is very disheartening to see that someone would purposely chop down a tree just for the pure pleasure of chopping it," said Dona Roth Kinney, director of Parks and Recreation. "Even worse, to chop down a memorial tree with a memorial plaque underneath it."

Police Chief Mark Hafner said penalties can range from a misdemeanor with a fine of up to \$1,000 and jail time of less one year to a felony with a \$5,000 fine and a jail sentence of five years. The penalty depends on the cost to replace the tree, he said.

"This is city property and no different than a tree in someone's front yard," Hafner said. "This is a total disrespect of public property and I encourage citizens to call us on 911 if they see anyone in our parks attempting to cut down a tree."

Anyone with information about the damaged trees is urged call the Police Department at 817-743-4581 to leave an anonymous tip.

Officers will be patrolling the parks on bicycles and in cars looking for anyone carrying equipment used to destroy the trees.