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Poisoners run wild

Tree

killers stalk suburban giants in quest for views



Vanda Carson

THE Vacluse couple building their dream house on a \$10 million block overlooking the Harbour fear a tree killer will return to poison their trees.

A moreton bay fig, a norfolk island pine and a hoop pine on Ron and Shauna Remen's property were poisoned late last month.

One tree will almost certainly die and the other two are in better health. If they don't die, the Remens fear the tree killer will strike again.

The family hope to save the trees with the help of a professional arborist, and are installing sensor lighting and a video camera to protect them.

They told *The Daily Telegraph* they were concerned to hear rumours circulating that they were responsible for the vandalism. The trees were at the rear of their block and did not block their view of the Harbour.

Each tree was 140 years old and heritage listed.

They are part of an exclusive area called the Hermitage Estate.

More than a dozen large holes were drilled into the trunks of the three trees and they were filled with an as yet unidentified blue-green liquid.

Mr Remen believes someone crept on to the building site during the night to poison the trees. He said he was shocked and devastated by their loss.

The trees were regarded as integral to the design of the house and garden, and his young daughter had planned to use one as a cubby house.

Mr Remen, 45, alerted Woollahra Council as soon as the poisonings were discovered. He also reported it to police, who are working with the council to try to find the culprits.

Tree poisoning is a growing problem in Sydney, and there is little deterrent.

Five councils told *The Daily Telegraph* there had never been a conviction for tree poisoning in their area.

Waverley Council has reported 30 tree poisonings on private land and 13 on public land in the past four years.

Woollahra Council has reported nine poisonings in the past year. There are two cases before the courts.

Mosman Council has had five poisonings on private property and three on public land. It has not launched a prosecution for tree poisoning since 2006.

Pittwater Council has up to six tree poisonings each year while two trees on land belonging to the Sydney City Council have been poisoned in the past year.

