

How to take care of your trees

Lawns and gardens tend to draw the bulk of homeowners' attention come spring and summer. But it's important that property owners tend to the trees that dot their property as well.

The types of trees homeowners have on their property may influence when it's time to trim and prune the trees. Homeowners concerned about tree maintenance should speak with local landscaping professionals and tree services about caring for the trees on their specific properties, but there are a few tricks to pruning trees that homeowners should keep in mind when dusting off their gardening tools.

- Prune at the right time. The Arbor Day Foundation® notes that pruning during dormancy (i.e., winter) is the most common practice. Pruning in late winter, after the season's coldest temperatures have passed, can lead to impressive and healthy growth in the spring. The ADF advises that some trees, including maple and birches, may bleed sap during pruning. But

this is normal and should cease as the tree starts to bloom. Novice landscapers should confirm with landscaping professionals about the best time to prune trees on their properties to ensure they are not inadvertently harming the trees or making them more vulnerable to fungus.

- Use appropriate tools. When removing branches, use sharp tools to minimize damage to the bark. The ADF notes that young trees are best pruned with one-hand pruning shears with curved blades. For trees with high branches, use a pole pruner or hire a professional tree service. Novices should avoid anything too risky when pruning their trees, leaving the more difficult jobs to the professionals.
- Follow the rules of pruning. When pruning trees, the ADF advises homeowners follow the one-third and a quarter rules of pruning. In adherence to these rules, no more than a quarter of a tree's crown is removed in a single season, and main side branches are

at least one-third smaller than the diameter of the trunk. When trimming deciduous trees, homeowners should never prune up from the bottom more than one-third of the tree's total height. Finally, where possible, homeowners should aim for side branches that form angles that are one-third off vertical to form 10 o'clock or 2 o'clock angles with the trunk.

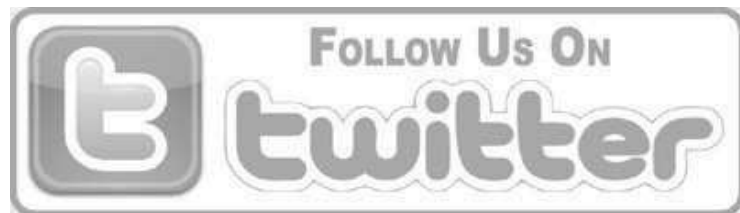
- Water correctly. Like lawns and gardens, trees need water to thrive. Insufficient watering can make it hard for trees to thrive in summer, but overwatering can be harmful, too. The ADF suggests that watering each tree for 30 seconds with a steady stream of water from a garden hose equipped with a diffuser nozzle should be sufficient. Newly planted trees may need more help as they try to establish deep root systems, so consider laying mulch around newly planted trees. Mulch helps the soil retain moisture and form



deeper, stronger root systems. Trees maintenance should be a priority as homeowners once again start tending to their lawns and gardens. More information about caring for trees is available at www.arborday.org.

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