

Maintaining the trees in your yard



Trees are among the most valuable features a homeowner can have in their yard. They provide shade, improve air quality, add beauty to the landscape, and can even increase property value. However, like any living part of the landscape, trees require regular care and attention to remain healthy and safe. Proper tree maintenance helps ensure that trees continue to thrive while reducing the risk of damage to property or injury to people.

One of the most important aspects of tree care is proper watering, especially for young or newly planted trees. While mature trees are often able to withstand periods of drought, younger trees require consistent moisture as their root systems develop. Deep watering is generally more effective than frequent shallow watering because it encourages roots to grow deeper into the soil. During extended dry periods, providing supplemental water can help prevent stress and keep trees healthy.

Mulching is another simple but highly effective practice for maintaining trees. A layer of mulch around the base of the tree helps retain moisture, regulate soil temperature, and reduce competition from weeds and grass. Organic mulches such as wood chips or

shredded bark slowly break down over time, improving soil quality. When applying mulch, it is important to avoid piling it directly against the trunk, as this can trap moisture and lead to rot. Instead, mulch should form a ring around the tree, leaving a few inches of space around the trunk.

Pruning plays a critical role in keeping trees strong and well-shaped. Removing dead, damaged, or diseased branches allows the tree to direct its energy toward healthy growth. Proper pruning can also improve airflow through the canopy and reduce the risk of branches breaking during storms. While light pruning can often be done by homeowners, large or high branches may require professional equipment and expertise to remove safely.

Regular inspection is another key part of tree maintenance. Homeowners should periodically check trees for signs of disease, pest activity, or structural problems. Cracks in the trunk, large dead branches, or unusual leaf discoloration can all signal that a tree may need attention. Early detection often allows problems to be treated before they become severe.

Protecting trees from lawn equipment is another important consideration. Damage from lawn mowers or string trimmers can injure the bark around the base of the tree, which may weaken it over time. Installing a protective border or mulch ring around the base can help prevent accidental damage while making mowing easier.

Soil health also plays a significant role in tree care. Compacted soil can prevent roots from receiving the oxygen and nutrients they need to grow properly. Aerating the soil around trees or avoiding heavy foot traffic near the root zone can help maintain healthy conditions for root development.

Fertilizing trees is sometimes beneficial, particularly if the soil lacks certain nutrients. However, fertilizing should be done carefully and usually after a soil test confirms that nutrients are needed. Excess fertilizer can sometimes do more harm than good.

Storm preparation is another reason tree maintenance is important. Weak branches, poor structure, or dead limbs can become hazardous during high winds or severe weather. Regular pruning and inspections help reduce the chances of branches falling and causing damage to homes, vehicles, or power lines.

In some cases, trees may outgrow their location or develop serious structural issues that cannot be corrected. When this happens, consulting a certified arborist can help homeowners determine the safest and most appropriate course of action.

Healthy trees contribute greatly to the beauty and comfort of a yard. With regular care—including proper watering, mulching, pruning, and inspections—homeowners can help ensure their trees remain strong, safe, and vibrant for many years to come.

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