

TREE CARE HINTS

The following tree care hints are meant as suggestions for basic tree care. For any tree care beyond basic maintenance, consult a qualified arborist... your local member of the Saint Louis Arborist Association

Give Trees a Good Start

1. Plant the right tree in the right place.

Do not plant:

- pin oaks in alkaline soils
- trees in old alkaline building rubble
- dogwoods in unprotected open sites

2. Plant properly.

Learn the biological requirements of your trees. Do not plant unless you plan to maintain.

Do not:

- crowd trees in small holes with compact soil
- over-amend the soil humus
- fertilize at planting time
- prune dead and dying branches and roots

3. Keep grass away.

Heavy use of herbicides may harm trees.

Do not:

- water grass heavily near trees that normally grow on dry sites
- lime grass heavily near trees that grow best in acid soils
- wound trees with lawnmowers and other machines

4. Brace, but not too tightly.

Do not:

- tie young trees so tightly that they do not move
- leave braces on after tree is established
- kill bark with cords, wires, bands, etc.

5. Prevent wounds

Do not:

- allow anyone to climb your tree with spikes
- allow heavy construction near your tree
- park cars near trees

Help Trees Stay Healthy

Before you fertilize or consider treatments for microelement problems, have a soil test done. Your tree may require soil acidification before fertilization, or treatment for microelement problems. Fertilizers add elements essential for healthy growth. Fertilizers are not tree food!

Trees get their energy from the sun. Leaves and needles trap energy in a molecule of sugar. Sugar is tree food. Keep leaves and needles healthy by timely treatments so trees can get their food. Keep soils free of compaction so roots can get water and essential elements. Do not over fertilize.

Some insects and microorganisms DO start tree problems. When in doubt about what to do, contact the extension agents from your county, state, or university, or ask the United States Forest Service or professional arborists.

Check for potential hazards.

- large dying and dead branches
- rot in roots and base (fruit bodies of fungi are signs of rot)
- large deep vertical cracks on opposite sides of trunk

Be on alert 5 to 10 years after construction. Have hazardous tree crowns reduced by professionals.

Topping

Topping trees is a serious injury regardless how it is done. Avoid it if possible by starting to prune early in the life of the tree to regulate its size and shape.

Wound Dressings

Wound dressings do not stop rot.

Do not:

- apply house paints or wood preservatives
- apply heavy coats of any material.

Research shows that wound dressings do not stop decay or stall rot. Trees have been responding effectively to their wounds for over 200 million years. Do not interfere with this natural process. Keep your tree healthy and it will take care of its wounds. In short time the wound surface will blend perfectly with the tree bark.

DON'T FORGET WILDLIFE. They need living and dead trees for survival. Consider them in your plans. Learn about trees.

The Real Cause of Many Tree Problems

Insects and microorganisms are not the real cause or starting point of many tree problems. These organisms are often secondary agents that attack weakened, wounded, improperly treated, neglected, and generally unhealthy trees. Poor tree health is a major worldwide problem.

Fighting the secondary agents that are often very obvious, or symptoms of poor health, cannot solve the basic problem. We must start now to attack the real causes: the starting points of poor health. The major organisms responsible are PEOPLE!

Once we recognize that we are often the problem, we can do much to solve it. Here are some brief guidelines that will help you keep your trees beautiful, safe, and healthy.

"We have met the enemy; and he is us!"
Pogo

