

Fall Tree Care

Fall is definitely in the air. As fall turns into winter, think about the damage that fluctuating temperatures can inflict on your trees. You can keep your trees alive and healthy by taking a few simple steps to protect them.

It is very important to water your trees until there is frost in the ground. Now is a good time to drag out the garden hose, and give all plants a deep watering. Roots grow best when they are not supporting leaves and growth above ground. Keeping the soil moist until frost will assure optimal growing conditions for roots and will also prevent the tree from drying out in the cold winter wind.

Add a fresh layer of mulch around the base of your trees. This inexpensive step will help maintain adequate moisture in the root zone. It also helps lessen the effects of warmer, sunny days and cold nights.

In winter, the bark and cambium of young trees is susceptible to splitting. The tissue heats up in the daylight hours and starts to expand. At night, the sudden drop in temperature causes the bark to split. Buy a roll of tree wrap and wrap it around the trunk of the tree. Start at the bottom of the tree, and wrap the tree from the root to just below the lowest branches, overlapping the wrap by about one half inch. Be sure to remove the tree wrap in the spring.

Now is also a good time to undertake fall pruning. Most shade trees can be pruned at this time of year. Consider hiring a certified arborist for jobs bigger than you can safely do yourself. For more information on proper pruning, check out the Tree TV Episode 2 video from your public library. It will help you decide how and where to cut by explaining the reasons for pruning and demonstrating proper pruning methods.

Sanitation is also an important fall tree care chore. If your deciduous trees had problems with insects this year, consider an application of dormant spray. This oil-based spray will coat the over-wintering eggs left by summer pests. If your trees had black spot, powdery mildew, or needle cast, rake up and dispose of leaves and needles, as spores remain on the fallen leaves and can re-infect the trees next spring.