

# HOME DECOR & MORE



## 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](http://www.arborday.org)

## How and When to Fertilize Your Lawn

Various components go into creating beautiful, lush lawns. Lawn maintenance involves ensuring lawns have all of the nutrients they need to thrive. Fertilizer is essential when feeding lawns, but fertilizing a lawn involves more than spreading fertilizer around the yard and hoping for the best. Fertilizing is a process that should be done

carefully and timed correctly for optimal results.

According to Scotts®, a premier lawn seed and care company, no two lawns are alike and each lawn has different needs. The type of grass and whether a lawn is mostly in the sun or shade may dictate fertilizer requirements. While many lawns are comprised of several different grasses, a general rule

of thumb is that the lawn will need to be fertilized in the spring at the very least. After that, fertilization schedules should be customized according to grass type, climate and other factors.

Spring is a prime time to fertilize because the lawn is reviving after a long season of cold weather and dormancy. Come spring, lawns need to be fed to

turn green and grow. Soil supplies some of the nutrients grass needs, but many soils lack elements that lawns need to survive the growing season. Lawn and garden experts at Lowes say a healthy and actively growing lawn uses a great deal of energy, and fertilizer will provide the boost it requires. Fertilizer helps promote new root and leaf growth, aid in recovery from damage, reduce weeds, and replace nutrients lost to water runoff.

### Fertilizing the right way

Follow these steps to feed the lawn and help it thrive.

- Identify the type of grass in your lawn and consult with a garden center to find the right type of fertilizer for your grass. Many grasses are categorized by season and may be referred to as cool season, transitional or warm season grasses.
- Test the soil to check for pH. You want the soil to be as close to neutral as possible so it can readily process the nutrients in the fertilizer.
- Broadcast or rotary spreaders will evenly distribute fertilizer and will not cause striping on the lawn like drop spreaders might. Resist the urge to fertilize by hand, as you may lay an uneven amount of product,

producing burns and brown spots.

- Fertilizers come in slow-release, fast-release, and weed and feed formulations. Which fertilizer you use will depend on the type of grass you have and how much time you have to devote to lawn maintenance. Slow-release fertilizers may be preferable because they do not need to be reapplied often.
- Use caution and set the spreader to distribute less product if you are unsure how much to apply. Excessive fertilizer can damage a lawn.
- Water the lawn well after

application, and always follow the fertilizer manufacturer's instructions.

- Keep people and pets off of the lawn for a day or two after application.
- Scotts recommends that lawns with warm-season grass be fed over the summer as they grow steadily from spring to fall.
- Another application of fertilizer in the fall will supply lawns with nutrients to continue to grow and then survive winter.

Build a strong lawn by feeding it effectively. Dense, healthy lawns can strangle weeds and lead to beautiful landscapes.



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