

Mature Tree Care

While any tree is likely to improve the appearance of your property, few would deny that trees are one landscape feature that gets significantly better with age. Unfortunately, not all trees ever get the chance to reach maturity, and those that do are still vulnerable to issues that the average homeowner is simply not able to prevent. Though established trees might seem solid and stable, mature tree care is very important to keep up appearances, and even more important than immature tree care when it comes to safety.

Mature Tree Care: Checking Your Tree's Health

Visual Inspections done by the homeowner are one of the most beneficial practices in mature tree care. While professional examinations done by a certified arborist should also be performed every year or two, homeowners who inspect their trees regularly will be better aware of any abnormalities in their trees' annual life cycle.

To tell if your tree is healthy, you should check four things: leaf size and appearance, the number of new buds and leaves, twig growth, and the appearance of the uppermost branches of the tree. If there seems to be a dramatic change in any of these from the previous year, it's likely that the tree is having some health issues. While any tree can fall victim to disease, insect infestation, and fungal activity, these are of particular concern for a mature tree. Care is essential when any of these issues present themselves, and frequent homeowner inspections are an excellent way to identify such problems early.

Mature Tree Pruning

For trees of all ages, pruning is often necessary to remove dead or diseased branches, or to keep branches from becoming an obstruction. However, mature tree pruning is a far different task than trimming hedges and smaller fruit trees! Since pruning mature trees is often a job that takes place high up and involves some pretty dangerous equipment, this is typically not a do-it-yourself project. When mature tree trimming is necessary, it is in the best interest of everyone involved to hire a professional. Not only do professional tree trimmers understand which branches pose the most threat to person, property, and/or the rest of the tree, they are outfitted with the best equipment and armed with knowledge of the safest techniques.

When mature tree pruning is performed to remove diseased branches, you'll also need to be careful what you do with the limbs you remove, as they could infect other trees in the area. Since the professionals generally have a set plan for disposing of diseased branches, they can save you a lot of hassle in this scenario. When mature tree pruning is performed because a branch is blocking a view, coming into contact with the house, or is posing a threat of property damage, you may opt to have the removed limb(s) turned into mulch that you can use in your garden and landscaping. Some tree service companies actually prefer to mulch large limbs onsite, as it saves them the trouble of loading the branch onto a truck for transport.

Mature Tree Care: Mulch and Fertilizer

If the well-established trees on your property are native to the area or are well suited to the local climate, there is very little weekly or monthly maintenance involved in keeping them healthy. However, the application of mulch and fertilizer can play a role in the health of a mature tree; sometimes, that effect is harmful rather than beneficial.

The placement of mulch at the base of a tree can be both beneficial and beautiful. Particularly when dealing with non-native trees and during seasons of abnormal weather activity, the addition of mulch keeps the ground around a tree's roots wet for a longer period of time after water or rain, which promotes growth no matter how old the tree is. Mulch should not cover any part of the tree's trunk, however, as excess moisture there could lead to decay. Though fertilizer may be a benefit to mature trees in specific circumstances, it is the application of lawn fertilizer that has the most dramatic effect on established trees. It is important to remember that a mature tree's roots often extend much farther than its branches. Putting fertilizer on a lawn may affect the tree, even if it looks like there is enough distance between it and the point of application. If your tree is already growing well, the application of fertilizer might be detrimental.