



Tree services can ensure trees maintain their awe-inspiring beauty and help homeowners protect their homes and their belongings.

# Give trees a little TLC

## Professional services can protect your property

Cold weather can take its toll on a property, especially in regions of the world where winters are harsh. Most parts of the landscape are vulnerable to damage from winter storms, but trees may be especially susceptible. By the end of winter, many homeowners wonder if their trees would benefit from some professional TLC.

While fall is a popular time to remove trees from a property, doing so in spring is not unheard of, especially if trees were affected by winter storms and now pose a threat to a home and the people who live inside it.

Homeowners considering tree services can explore the following ways that some professional arbor attention can protect them and their homes.

- Tree services can help protect a home's foundation. Old trees that stretch well into the sky can be captivating, but they also can pose a threat to a home's foundation. Such trees may have especially large root zones that may extend beneath walkways and even a home. In the latter instance, foundations may crack as roots try to stake their claim to the ground beneath a home. According to the home improvement resource HomeAdvisor, homeowners pay an average of just over \$4,000 to repair foundation issues, though major problems can cost considerably more than that. A professional tree service can remove aging trees that might be beautiful and awe-inspiring but still pose a threat to a home and the areas surrounding it.

- Tree services can improve visibility. Trees that have aged a bit since their last trimming might affect the view of a property from inside a home. Overgrown branches can compromise resi-

dents' ability to see and experience the natural beauty just outside their windows. The average homeowner may be able to trim short

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trees on his or her own, but if views from the second floor of a home or higher have been compromised, it's much safer to call a professional tree service. Such services have the right

tools and experienced personnel necessary to safely trim high branches on tall trees.

- Tree services can help prevent future damage. Even if trees made it through a recent winter unscathed, that's no guarantee next winter or even the coming seasons of spring, summer and fall won't ultimately prove their undoing. Travelers Insurance notes that weather-related roof damage, including damage resulting from falling limbs and branches weighed down by snow during the winter months, accounted for more than half of all Travelers property loss claims between 2009 and 2016. According to BNC Insurance and Risk Advisors, homeowners may be liable if a tree they knew posed a threat falls onto a passerby or a neighbor's property and causes damage or injury. Having all trees properly trimmed each year, but especially those that can fall on your home and your neighbors' homes, may prevent future damage and legal issues.

Professionals can ensure trees maintain beauty and help homeowners protect their homes and belongings.

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## Recognizing and addressing leaf spot

Homeowners who take pride in their properties may be alarmed to notice seemingly spotted leaves on their trees. Such spots may be indicative of a condition known as leaf spot.

In spite of its appearance, leaf spot is often harmless. According to the Missouri Botanical Garden, leaf spot is a term used to describe a number of diseases that can affect the foliage of ornamentals and shade trees. Often caused by fungi that can spread thanks to wind and/or spring rains, leaf spot also may be a byproduct of bacteria. As unsightly as leaf spot can be, the Missouri Botanical Garden advises that established plants will only be adversely affected by leaf spot if defoliation occurs three or more years in a row.

While leaf spot is often harmless, homeowners should still learn to recognize it and document its presence to ensure it does not become a long-term problem.

### HOW TO RECOGNIZE LEAF SPOT

Because leaf spot is an umbrella term that refers to various diseases, its symptoms can vary depending on which type of leaf spot is affecting a tree.

- **SPOTS:** The spots of leaf spot vary in size and color depending on the plant, the organism that's affecting it and the stage of development. Spots are typically brown, but can be tan or black as well.
- **MARGINS:** Another sign of leaf spot is the presence of concentric rings or dark margins on the leaves around the infected areas.
- **BLACK DOTS:** If fungus is the cause of the leaf spot, the fungal bodies may appear as black dots in the spots. These dots may be within the rings or in central clusters.
- **YELLOW LEAVES:** Some leaves that are infected with leaf spot turn yellow and drop prematurely.

If leaf spots are not noticed immediately, they may gradually combine to form large blotches.

### HOW TO ADDRESS LEAF SPOT

Leaf spot does not necessarily need to be addressed. As the Missouri Botanical Garden notes, many trees tolerate leaf spot and suffer little to no damage. In addition, the University of Minnesota Extension notes that the majority of leaf spot diseases affect only a small percentage of infected trees' overall leaf area and are only minimal stressors on the trees.

But homeowners who want to address leaf spot can take certain steps to do so.

- Remove infected leaves. As infected leaves fall, homeowners can remove them so the spores that caused the initial infection cannot be blown onto healthy leaves and spread the disease.
- Remove dead twigs. Removing dead twigs also can help get rid of spores that can contribute to infection.
- Change watering techniques. When watering trees, homeowners who want to prevent leaf spot or stop it from spreading can avoid overhead watering, instead using soaker hoses. Watering early in the day also can give foliage ample time to dry off before nightfall.
- Prune plants. Pruning plants promotes healthy air circulation and reduces crowding, which can help keep foliage dry, making trees less vulnerable to leaf spot.

As unsightly as it can appear, leaf spot is often harmless. But homeowners can take steps to prevent it and stop it from spreading to healthy leaves.





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