



Frequently Asked Tree Questions

Compiled by Oregon Community Trees and the
Oregon Department of Forestry
in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service



- **Are trees a good investment?** Yes - better than the stock market! Research conducted here in the PNW by the USDA Forest Service shows that for every \$1 invested in trees, \$2.70 worth of benefits is returned. Learn more about the benefits of trees at http://www.treesaregood.com/treecare/tree_benefits.aspx.
- **What kind of tree should I plant in my yard?** The right tree in the right place. Consider the location you want to plant before you decide on the species. A good website to see photos of trees or learn about different trees you can plant can be found at <http://oregonstate.edu/dept/ldplants/>
- **How do I plant a tree?** Choose the location and species carefully and thoughtfully, and then plant it properly. See http://www.treesaregood.com/treecare/tree_planting.aspx for advice.
- **Should I stake a tree after I plant it?** Not necessarily. Only stake a tree if the characteristics of the site and the tree make it necessary. Learn more at <http://www.cmg.colostate.edu/gardennotes/634.pdf>.
- **What can I do to give my new tree a good start?** Water and mulch are two of the best things for new trees. Check out this guide for more ideas: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/pdf/ec/ec1438.pdf>
- **Why do trees change color?** A combination of factors – shorter fall days and cooler nights cause trees to stop producing chlorophyll (green) and allows the true colors of the leaves to be seen. To learn more, visit <http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/pubs/leaves/leaves.shtml>
- **How can I get grass to grow underneath my tree?** Trees and turf have different water requirements. If you gave grass underneath a tree all the water it needs, you would kill the tree. Trees with lawn/turf do best when surrounded by mulch .See http://www.treesaregood.com/treecare/trees_turf.aspx for details.
- **My tree is too big, should I top it?** No, topping is one of the worst things you can do to a tree – it will only make the tree more hazardous. Visit www.plantamnesty.org for details or learn more at <http://www.treesaregood.com/treecare/topping.aspx>.
- **When should I prune my trees and how do I do it?** The best time to prune deciduous (hardwood) trees is when they are dormant. Some flowering trees you may want to prune right after flowering. Conifers may be pruned any time of year, but pruning during the dormant season may minimize sap and resin flow from cut branches. Visit http://www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/howtos/ht_prune/prun001.htm.
- **My tree was damaged in a storm. Can I save it?** Maybe; it depends on the age of the tree and the extent of the damage. The best thing is to not make matters worse by pruning it incorrectly. See http://www.oregon.gov/ODF/URBAN_FORESTS/docs/Other_Publications/CanTheseTreesBeSaved.pdf.

- **Is it safe for a homeowner to stand on a ladder and run a chain saw?** Basically, no – you should call in a professional. Learn more at http://www.treesaregood.com/treecare/hire_arborist.aspx.
- **Should I use tree wound paint after I make a pruning cut?** No, tree wound paint has no benefit to the tree, and could inhibit the tree's recovery from the pruning wounds.
- **My tree is too big for me to prune myself, how can I find a good arborist?** Only hire someone who is a Certified Arborist. Check out <http://pnwisa.org/member-services/promotional-directory/commercial-arborists/> to find a one near you. Beware of door-knockers offering you free tree advice.
- **The roots of my tree keep coming up in my yard and I run over them with the lawnmower. Can I do anything about this?** While you can remove small roots, be careful not to injure the tree. Better yet, make a bigger mulch circle: <http://www.treesaregood.com/treecare/mulching.aspx>.
- **I think that tree roots have broken into my sewer line. What should I do?** Roots will most certainly take advantage of any existing break, crack, or separation in a line of sewer pipe, but they can't initiate a break. The problem is with your pipes, not the tree. You might try a copper sulfate treatment, but better yet find an arborist at <http://pnwisa.org/member-services/promotional-directory/commercial-arborists/>
- **My tree looks sick, what can I do?** Contact the Master Gardeners at your local OSU Extension Service or WSU Extension Service office (<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/locations.php> or <http://extension.wsu.edu/gardening/master/Pages/default.aspx>).
- **There is construction going on near my trees, should I be concerned?** Yes – it is important to protect tree roots. See http://www.treesaregood.com/treecare/avoiding_construction.aspx for a greater understanding of this situation.
- **How do I prune fruit trees?** Fruit tree pruning involves using different techniques than you would usually use on landscape trees, in order to encourage fruit production and make it easier to pick. Learn more from this publication: <http://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1957/22166/pnw400.pdf>
- **The utility company pruned the trees on my street, and now they look ugly – is there a better solution?** We enjoy the benefits of trees, but we also need safe reliable delivery of electricity. Your utility has a tough job making trees and utility lines co-exist. While they should prune to correct standards, some trees under powerlines really are better off being removed and replaced with a better tree. Learn more about how to avoid conflicts at http://www.treesaregood.com/treecare/avoiding_conflicts.aspx.
- **What do I do if I think my tree might be hazardous?** Trees need care, and if left uncared for, they can become liabilities instead of assets. Here is a publication that will help you learn to recognize potential hazards: <http://www.treesaregood.com/treecare/hazards.aspx>. If your tree has significant structural issues, you will want to contact a Certified Arborist to get a hazard tree assessment.
- **Where can I go to learn more about trees?** We recommend the following websites: Oregon Community Trees (www.oregoncommunitytrees.org), Trees Are Good (www.treesaregood.com), and the Arbor Day Foundation (www.arborday.org).