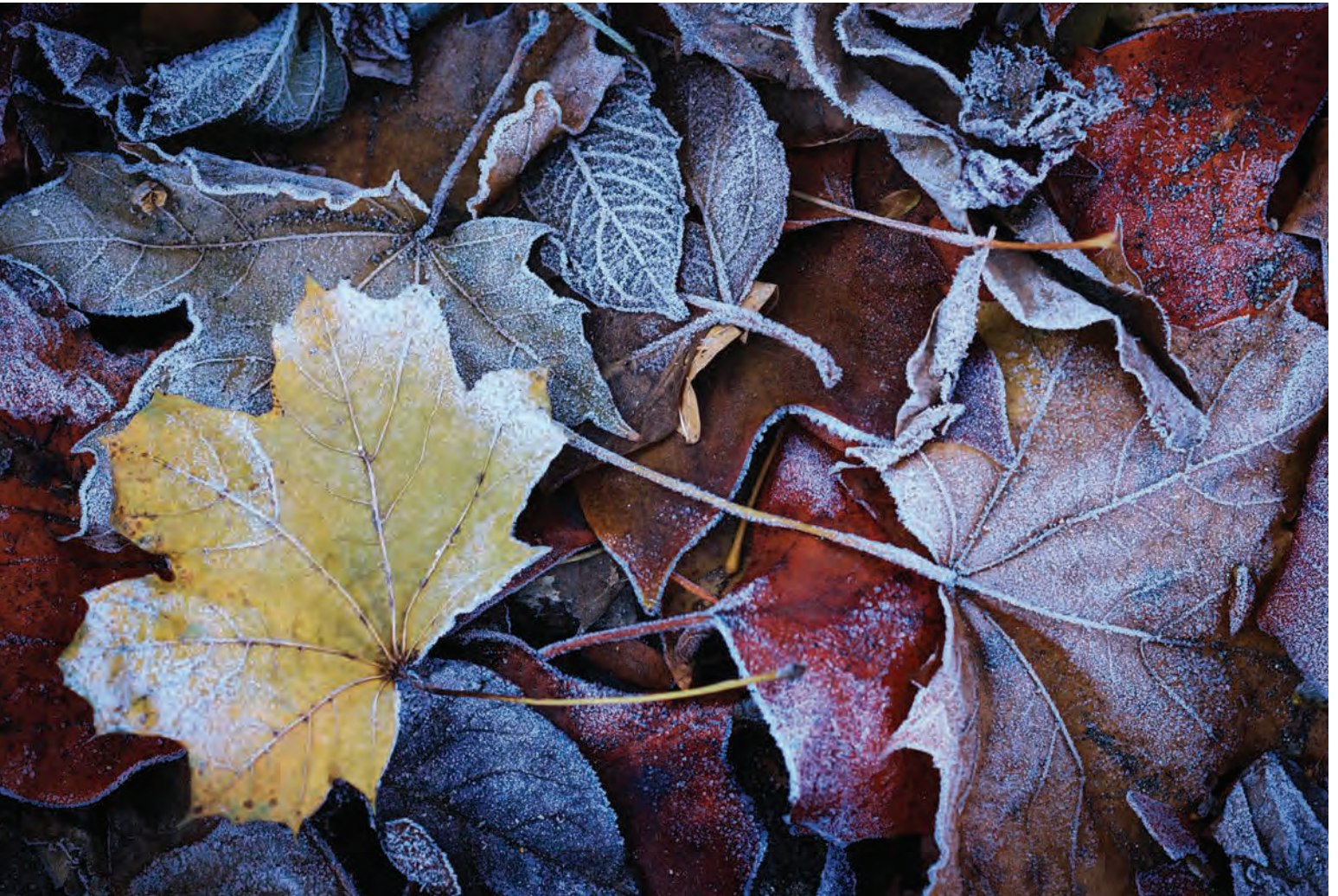




DORMANT SEASON TREE CARE

**DAMAGE PREVENTION
AND MAINTENANCE**



If you want to ensure your trees survive through winter and thrive come spring and summer, it's important to take some steps now to protect them.

There are several things that should be done this dormant season to prepare your trees for harsh weather and the onset of spring. Taking these steps now can potentially prevent storm damage as well as reduce the likelihood of damage to your home and other personal property from falling limbs. Below is a list of things that should be addressed with your trees.

PRUNING

In general, trees should be pruned every two to four years to encourage good structure and reduce or eliminate low limbs that may be shading out the turf in your lawn.



The dormant season is a great time of year to do this pruning, because the leaves are off the trees and an arborist can see and adjust the structure of the canopy. In addition to maintenance pruning, broken or hanging limbs should also be removed at this time.

When working with Mother Nature, nothing is guaranteed. However, pruning before winter storms can reduce the risk of damage due to snow and ice. When snow and ice accumulate, they can become so heavy that they break your trees' branches and even bring down entire trees. This is made worse when combined with winter winds and storms. If the weight of the snow and ice isn't enough to do damage to a tree, the added pressure of a strong wind often brings trees to their breaking point.

WHY DO TREES FAIL DURING WINTER STORMS?

After large storms, the damage is so bad news crews often air footage of downed limbs and trees, and you just need to look down your street to witness the carnage first-hand. One thing that many clients overlook is pruning trees when they are young. By pruning your trees when they are young, an arborist can make small cuts which will have a major impact on your trees' strength as they age. Most trees fail where narrow branch unions form in the canopy of the tree. When a tree is young these defects can be slowed or eliminated.



Once a tree reaches a mature size it is difficult to remove or eliminate narrow or weak branch unions. However, this should not keep you from having your large trees pruned. Things to consider on larger trees include the removal of dead limbs, reduction cuts on weak limbs and removal of low limbs to get light to the yard. If an arborist sees a major defect, they may recommend removal

of the tree entirely or installation of a supporting cable to reduce failure of a weak branch union.



Pruning before winter storms arrive is a good way to save money on home repairs, too. High-speed winds can easily break ice-laden branches and send them flying surprising distances through the air. Even if your trees are not close to your house, you might be surprised at how quickly your roof gets damaged from fallen branches or uprooted trees – not to mention what might happen if a large branch or an entire tree were to land on your car.

Pruning of your trees can be a complicated and dangerous job that requires the skill of a trained arborist. If your trees have not been pruned recently, consider having one of Ryan Lawn and Tree’s arborists stop by and make recommendations on what pruning should be addressed with your trees. Pruning of large trees should be left to professionals most, if not all, of the time. For help pruning younger trees, you can research best practices on the University of Florida website <http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/woody/>.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE STORM DAMAGE TO YOUR TREES



Unfortunately, we cannot predict every storm. You may get taken by surprise by an early winter storm before your pruning is completed, or your area could be hit by a large ice storm severe enough to damage your trees even though they were already pruned and fortified. Fortunately, you can take steps to repair and care for your trees after they've been damaged by a storm.

APPROACH WITH CAUTION AND ASSESS THE SITUATION

First of all, always approach a damaged tree with caution. If a tree has fallen on power lines, call 911. If you see any large branches under tension or hanging off the tree, call a professional tree service company. Do not try to take down large branches if you are not equipped and experienced enough for the job. When in doubt, call for help.



MAKING THE TOUGH DECISION

In some cases, a tree cannot be saved. If the storm's damage is too great, the tree won't recover and will start to rot, leaving a giant liability and safety hazard in your yard. After time, a dead tree will fall if you don't have it taken care of by professionals.

To make this decision, take a good look at your tree and what's happened to it. How many major limbs have been damaged or broken? The more major limbs that are compromised, the less likely the tree will be to survive. Sometimes the answer is immediately obvious. If it is time to say goodbye to your tree, call an expert arborist to safely remove the tree so that no one is injured and no property is damaged.

MULCHING

The dormant season is a great time to freshen up your mulch. Mulching trees and shrubs has many benefits including moderation of soil temperatures, addition of organic matter to the soil profile, maintaining soil moisture and elimination of competition between turf and tree root systems. A major benefit of mulch is aesthetics. Nothing looks better in a landscape than a fresh layer of mulch in your beds and around trees to add that finishing touch.

If you are mulching around a tree, start the mulch ring approximately one inch from the trunk of the tree. Spread mulch out to the edge of the canopy in a wide, even circle. The mulch layer should be no more than a few inches deep.

Mulch ‘volcanoes’ pose a risk to trees. It is not uncommon to see these scourges in landscapes around town. Mulch piled up around the trunk of a tree, reaching several inches up from the ground, causes the trunk to begin to rot and decay.



WATERING

Watering may be the most overlooked portion of dormant season tree care. Midwest winters can be very dry, and this fall and winter are lining up to be no different. At minimum trees and shrubs that are established should be watered monthly through the growing season with 1-2" of water. Newly planted trees and shrubs should be watered more often to insure survivability until spring. If you have evergreens in your landscape, watering is mandatory for survival through winter months. Evergreens should be watered with 1-2" of water every two weeks through the dormant season since they continue to lose moisture through their foliage all year long.



FERTILIZATION

Late fall and early spring are the two best times to fertilize your trees and shrubs. These times of year the tree and shrub root systems are actively growing and absorbing nutrients. Fertilization during these two key times of year will encourage rapid growth the following spring.

Be aware that fertilization is not necessary for all trees and shrubs.

There are two main reasons an arborist would encourage fertilization. The first is any time you want to encourage growth and the second is when a nutrient deficiency has been found through soil or foliar testing.



WINTER CARE MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE



Pruning your trees before winter storms arrive will greatly increase their chances of withstanding foul winter weather without damage. Neglecting your trees during the winter, however, can result in major damage and loss. If you have a tree that's damaged after a storm, leaving it alone is the worst thing you can do for it, and it can pose a major safety risk and liability for your property.

Winter is a great time to freshen up the mulched areas on your property. Mulching around trees and in landscape beds has many benefits, not the least of which is the added sparkle and clean lines it gives to the overall landscape.

Newly planted trees and evergreens especially need water during our dry winters. Drag out a hose when temperatures are above freezing and give them a drink! Your trees and shrubs may benefit from fertilization as well. Added nutrients will help these plants grow faster and improve their overall health and vigor.

The dormant season is an important time of year to care for your trees and shrubs. If you have questions or would like one of our arborists to make recommendations don't hesitate to call **855-216-2293** or visit www.ryanlawn.com.

