

Why Prune Trees in Winter?

Winter is the optimal time to prune most trees. Proper pruning at this time helps remove damaged limbs and thin out dense growth, which are essential maintenance tasks for homeowners. During late fall/early winter, trees enter a dormant phase, making them less susceptible to damage from insects and disease. This approach leads to less stress for the tree and encourages healthier growth when spring arrives. Because of pest issues and stress caused to the tree, summer and fall pruning should only be done to remove limbs that have been damaged during the growing season and pose a hazard.

Exceptions to Winter Pruning

Not all tree species should be pruned in winter. Trees that produce showy flowers, such as dogwoods and hawthorns, are best pruned soon after their flowering period ends. For these species, it is important to wait until their blooms have finished before cutting back branches to ensure healthy flowering in the following year.

Special Considerations for Oak Trees

Oak trees require careful attention due to serious disease issues. They should not be pruned from April 1st through December 1st to prevent the spread of oak wilt (*Bretziella fagacearum*), a fatal disease caused by a fungus. One way the fungal spores are transported are by beetles attracted to wounds, including those made during pruning. Newly infected trees can quickly produce additional spores, potentially accelerating the spread of this disease. Local ordinances, such as those in Avon Lake, prohibit pruning oak trees during this period except in imminently hazardous situations. When pruning is necessary under these circumstances, special precautions must be taken to minimize the risk of infection. In all cases, it is required to work with an [ISA Certified Arborist](#) registered with the City ([Avon Lake, Ohio Codified Ordinance 1018.07](#)) to properly manage these situations.

Pruning Safety and Expertise

Pruning trees is a skilled task, and improper techniques can result in significant damage. For a general overview of proper pruning techniques, visit [Pruning Basics](#). It is highly recommended to consult a certified arborist unless you have received specialized training. A list of certified arborists is available at [Trees Are Good](#)