

Care for Existing Trees

The Connection

Are there large trees on the property that need care? For tree pruning services only hire ISA arborists and, under their recommendations, opt for tree pruning rather than removal of non-hazardous trees. Care for mature trees by making sure all the non-native vines such as English ivy, wisteria, and kudzu are removed, protect the root zones through mulching, and avoid mowing or weed whacking near the trunk.

Take Action

Perform advanced care on the property's existing trees annually such as non-native vine removal, proper mulching in the root zone, and only when required, hire only ISA certified arborist for pruning, tree treatment, and advanced tree care needs to earn 1 acorn. If safe and practical, consider leaving snags to support wildlife (see the “provide cover” goal).

Acorns



Tracks



Instructions

- ☐ Care for all existing trees on the property by:
 - ☐ Remove any non-native vines growing on the trees listed under “Vine Removal” below
 - ☐ Properly mulch any trees growing in the exposed lawn, bare dirt, or landscaping areas (trees in natural buffer areas with natural mulch and leaf litter are exempt)
 - ☐ Before self-pruning any trees you agree to watch the pruning 101 training (see below)
 - ☐ For large tree care and pruning needs, you agree to use an ISA certified arborist (see below)

Vine Removal

Are the existing trees on the property covered in vines? While there are native vines that do not cause harm to trees, it is more common to see our trees covered in non-native vines like English Ivy. These non-native vines, are particularly harmful to our trees and will eventually kill the tree. Start showing existing trees some love by removing this list of harmful vines off the properties trees!

Must Remove off Trees List of Vines

1. **Chinese/Japanese wisteria** (*Wisteria sinensis/ Wisteria floribunda*)
2. **English ivy** (*Hedera helix*)
3. **kudzu** (*Pueraria montana var. lobata*)

Please refer to our “non-native plants reference” to identify and remove these vines:

- <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1W-Hi4-1t6ZjnDQ20ToLy0You1Bgp2GNUiq9zXeyZXA0/edit?usp=sharing>

Mulching

Existing trees on the property can benefit from property mulching in the root zone. Are there trees on the lawn or the landscape with grass growing straight up to the trunk or is the tree surrounded by bare dirt? Trees in this condition benefit from proper mulching which helps protect the roots and retains moisture, especially during hot dry weather. It also clearly exposes the tree and keeps the roots and trunk better protected from

mowers and string trimmers. Mulching is considered one of the best things you can do to extend the lives of landscape trees.

To mulch your tree using wood chips or preferably undyed mulch to a total depth of 2-4 inches. You want to mulch around the tree at a very minimum of 5 feet in diameter but ideally to the drip line of the tree (the outermost edge of the tree canopy). Most importantly, you need to avoid piling up mulch against the sides of your tree known as “volcano mulching.” This buries the tree and negatively affects tree health. You want the root flare of the tree to stay visible like in the first photo below and avoid practices like the second photo (Jackson, 2018).



“This is a properly mulched tree. Note the mulch is only a few inches deep, not mounded around the trunk. The root flare is visible and the mulch extends to the edge of the tree’s crown, or the drip line.” (Properly Mulched Tree, Jackson, 2018)



“Avoid piling mulch in the appearance of a volcano cone around trees. Volcano mulching, or piling mulch against the trunk, can cause major tree health problems.” (Volcano Mulching, Jackson, 2018)

Pruning Training

Before pruning any trees on the property, we recommend that you cover some pruning basics. We require volunteers to have taken two pieces of training called Pruning 101 and Pruning 102 before volunteering with our pruning projects. However, we recommend, at a minimum, you take pruning 101 (offered online) before doing even light pruning.

Pruning can be an extremely useful tool for healthy urban trees to help remove damaged or diseased limbs and provide limb clearance and aesthetic shaping. Improper pruning can be detrimental to trees resulting in unsafe/hazardous trees or tree death.

If you plan on pruning any of the property trees, first navigate to Trees Atlanta's pruning page: <https://www.treesatlanta.org/resources/pruning/> and watch the Pruning 101 webinar. After that, you can work on pruning trees but we recommend sticking to younger trees and lightweight branches at a level you can reach from the ground. Do not attempt to prune a tree if the branches are too heavy for you to pick up/handle by yourself, if you have to climb a ladder to reach the branches, or if it's near a power line. (Davey, 2019).

If you enjoyed pruning 101, you can continue your pruning training to 102 and 103 which are in-person training with Trees Atlanta and you can consult some helpful tips on Davey Tree's blog:

- <https://blog.davey.com/2019/03/diy-how-to-trim-tree-branches-yourself/>

ISA Arborist Consultation

For professional tree care whether it is for mature tree pruning, tree assessment or treatment, or ultimately tree removal, the work should be completed by a Certified Arborist with credentials from the International Association of Arboriculture.

You might not realize that not all "tree companies" are trained tree care service providers, so be prudent if someone comes knocking on your door, especially after a storm. Take the time to find a qualified tree professional who can protect your trees, property, and investment. Here are some helpful tips when selecting a tree care company, check for the following:

- Is it a licensed business?

Can they show proof of workers' insurance and liability insurance?
Do they employ ISA Certified Arborists?
Do they understand the local tree protection ordinance and follow industry safety protocols?
Will they put price estimates and agreements in writing?

A qualified tree care company will readily show you documentation and certification numbers, as well as take the time to address your concerns. Ask for and check references whenever possible. Visit the Georgia Arborist Association "Find a Tree Care Professional" webpage to find a certified Arborist near you:

<https://georgiaarborist.org/find-tree-care>

From Our Partner: Georgia Arborist Association

Georgia Arborist Association is a resource for tree care professionals and the public to protect and care for Georgia's trees. Its mission is "to promote safe and proper Arboriculture practices in the state of Georgia through networking, training, and public education; and to be a voice for the professional arborists who manage and care for Georgia's trees."

They offer several resources for non-arborists by offering information about common questions you may have about landscape trees and facilitating a network where you can look up certified tree care professionals that are qualified tree care professionals.

Website: www.georgiaarborist.org/

Phone: 404-913-1422

Email: info@georgiaarborist.org

References

Davey. (March 28, 2019). "DIY - HOW TO TRIM TREE BRANCHES YOURSELF". Davey Tree.
<https://blog.davey.com/2019/03/diy-how-to-trim-tree-branches-yourself/>

Jackson, David. (April 12, 2018). "Mulching Landscape Trees." Penn State Extension.
<https://extension.psu.edu/mulching-landscape-trees>