

All Gardens Great & Small
by
York Co.
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An Eleven Step Program To Kill Your Trees

Everyone loves shade trees except when they are dead or dying trees. Proper tree care begins with good tree selection, mulching and fertilization.

Sometime the best way to learn how to properly care for trees is to highlight what not to do; ergo Dr. Treevorkian's prescriptions.

Many 'what not to do's' seem quite obvious no-nos. In some communities neighbor after neighbor repeat poor tree care practices. Here's the eleven steps to kill your trees.

Plant a tree in the wrong place. Put a flowering dogwood or Japanese maple in hot, full sun and you will provide the type of stress that encourages dogwood borers or Verticillium infections of roots on the maple. The tree suffers a slow decline and death. Don't pave an area above tree roots or cut the roots when making changes in the grade.

Plant pestiferous trees. Plant European white bark birches and

sit back and watch the bronze birch borers arrive. Plant a single tree type. Wait for a pest or disease causing organisms to have a feast. Examples include Dutch elm disease on American Elms or Euonymous scale on euonymous shrubs.

Change the soil grade. Add soil over the root system or plant too deep and just wait for the resulting stress to cause your tree to decline and die a slow death.

Overmulch. Adding 6-8 inches of organic mulch or more instead of the recommended 2-3 inches, especially by mounding it around the trunk helps promote crown rots by keeping the trunks moist. Overmulching results in overly wet soils for extended periods, and provides great hiding places for bark-feeding rodents in the winter.

Provide poor nutrition. Plant pin oak, river birch, and white pine in highly alkaline soils and watch the results. These acid-loving plants will not be able to get adequate iron from the soil. Even with remedial care, the result over the years is usually a declin-

ing tree.

Prune poorly. By topping the trees and leaving huge stubs leads to tree decline and death. Removing 70-80% of the foliage drastically reduces the trees food-producing capacity. This blow to the tree's energy balance is sure to pay off with premature tree death.

Girdle the plants. This is as close to sure tree death as it gets. Simply leave non-degrading twine or wire used to tie the root ball around the base of the tree. It will be loose at first, but gradually it will tighten as the tree grows in girth and eventually the twine or wire will become imbedded in the stem and be a barrier between the

food coming from the leaves through the stem to the roots. Without food the roots will die and fail to send water up to the leaves. Tree death will follow.

Let the soil dry out. On young trees the root ball needs watered weekly through the summer months. Overfertilizing young trees can 'burn' roots making it harder for trees to survive a drought.

Compact the soil around trees. Heavy foot traffic, lawn mowers, or automobiles can reduce oxygen and water to tree roots. Also avoid letting vines grow on trees that deprive the tree of water and light.

Bang a lawnmower into the bark. Trees that are injured at the base never recover from severe injury. String trimmers also cut the bark leading to premature death.

Vandalize a neighbor's tree. Vandals express their anger by defacing young or old trees. Ways to prevent vandals include planting large trees (minimum of 2" caliber), prune lower limbs to at least 8' above the sidewalk or use trees with thorns.

Any questions regarding the above article can be addressed to Tom Becker, Penn State Cooperative Extension at (717) 840-7408.

Have The Right Tools For Gardening

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Digging around in your garden is not exactly brain surgery, but like surgeons, every gardener should have the right tool for the right job.

Laymen may say that a shovel is just a shovel, but a scientist in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences points out that real gardeners need a spad — and about four other essential gardening implements.

"These days there are catalogs and stores with very specialized equipment, but many gardeners really just need some basic tools," says J. Robert Nuss, professor of ornamental horticulture. "Once you have a solid set of tools, then you can branch out into specialty equipment."

Nuss recommends five basic tools:

•A long-handled spade. This

tool is designed for digging. The blade is straight and set at an angle so it cuts easily into the soil. "A spade is not a shovel," Nuss explains. "A shovel is designed like a scoop and is used to move material from one place to another."

•A spading fork. This tool has flat, square tines and is used for moving heavy soil. "Spading forks are invaluable for preparing soil in the spring and harvesting some types of vegetables in the fall," Nuss says. "Don't confuse it with a pitchfork, which has rounded, slender tines and is used to move straw or compost."

•A steel rake. These large rakes are used to break up clay, to smooth out soil, and to rake in fertilizers. "If the garden is large, get a wide, heavy rake," Nuss says. "It wouldn't hurt to have a wide leaf rake for lawn work."

•A hoe. Hoes are used to form rows, cover seeds, move soil, cut out weeds and make holes for

planting seedlings. "Hoes come in all types and sizes, but most gardeners don't need heavy ones," Nuss says. The most versatile hoes are dual-purpose models, with a triangular cutting head on one side and a cultivating tool with three tines on the other side."

•A hand trowel. Any hand tool that makes gardening more efficient is an invaluable addition to the homeowner's arsenal of tools. "Hand tools are best for marking rows, weeding, making furrows and moving small plants," Nuss says.

Nuss says when it comes to gardening, choosing a big tool isn't necessarily better. "Heavy tools are fine for big people, but if you are short on size or energy, pick smaller tools," he explains. "The same logic applies to picking the best handle length. Tools are extensions of the body and should be used for extra leverage or reach when pulling or cutting."



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