Structural Pruning

Winter is a good time to look at your trees and shrubs to identify if they need to be pruned. Clearance issues, structural problems, dead wood, and broken branches can be easily identified during the winter season.

Assessing your pruning needs is simple. Your initial check should be for dead, diseased, and broken limbs. Dead branches are characterized by flaking bark, brittle buds, and the absence of needles (bald cypress and dawn redwood species are exceptions). Diseased limbs feature oozing lesions along the stem, and stained bark tissue. Broken limbs are the most obvious. Broken limbs can occur from wind, snow load, ice load, and mechanical damage.

Clearance issues arise when a plant’s growth pattern infringes upon structures or areas not intended for plant growth. Keeping branches pruned away from your house and surrounding structures prevents damage to your property and the plant. A tree which is not structurally maintained may interfere with fences, houses, play areas, driveways/walkways and numerous other objects.

As you assess your plants you might see bugs that have made a home in your landscape. Keep in mind that not all bugs you see on your plant material (for example, lady bugs) are threats to your tree’s health. Should you need assistance with bug/pest identification, contact a reputable arborist (www.isa-arbor.com).

Once you’ve identified limbs you need to prune, take your time and be sure to make a proper cut on broken branches which tend to tear easily. For assistance, review the Metro District’s Forestry video that demonstrates the proper pruning technique. Maintaining your trees and shrubs will enhance your home’s appearance and allow the plants to live a healthier and longer life.

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