

Tree-Maintenance Timetable

Years After Planting	Necessary	Desirable	When Required
0–3	Watering Mulching	Pest monitoring	Staking
3–5*	Watering Mulching Pruning	Pest monitoring	Staking Fertilizing
5–10		Watering Mulching Pruning Pest monitoring	Fertilizing
10 and beyond		Watering Mulching Pruning Pest monitoring	Fertilizing

*Usual amount of time needed for establishment of newly planted trees. This can vary widely depending on proper species and site selection, size of transplanted tree, weather conditions and care during the first few years.

Watering

Proper watering is the best way to provide good care for your tree. Research your tree to see if it is one that enjoys moist soils, such as the bald cypress, or if it is one that prefers dry soils, such as the post oak. Check the soil moisture with a soil probe (you also can use an old screwdriver or even your finger). Maintain an adequate amount of moisture 4 to 6 inches below the surface. This usually requires a weekly application of water.

Mulching

Proper mulching protects the tree trunk and roots from injury, holds soil moisture and moderates soil temperature. Shredded bark or wood-chip mulches recycle nutrients into the soil and mimic the conditions of the forest floor. Maintain a bark or wood-chip mulch ring at a depth of no more

than 2 to 3 inches. Mulch never should be piled against the trunk, but should be spread out to as wide an area as possible. Mulch spread underneath the entire canopy of the tree is best, but may not be practical for your yard. See *Mulch—Your Tree’s Best Friend* for more information.

Pest monitoring

Most pest infestations are the result of soil, weather or people problems. Practicing good plant health care (proper watering, mulching etc.) will reduce the need for pest control. Insects and diseases always should be properly diagnosed before any control method is applied. Improper pesticide use can increase the risk of pest infestation. Begin pest monitoring as leaves emerge. If a pest is identified, apply the proper pesticide (according to label recommendations) to the affected area or plant.

Fertilizing

Fertilization of yard trees is often not necessary and is usually over-applied. Fertilizer never should be used as a cure-all. Contact your local university extension office for information on how to conduct a soil test. This easy and inexpensive test will tell you if fertilizer is necessary and the rate at which it should be applied. Fertilizer should not be applied until the tree has become established. This may take several years.

Staking

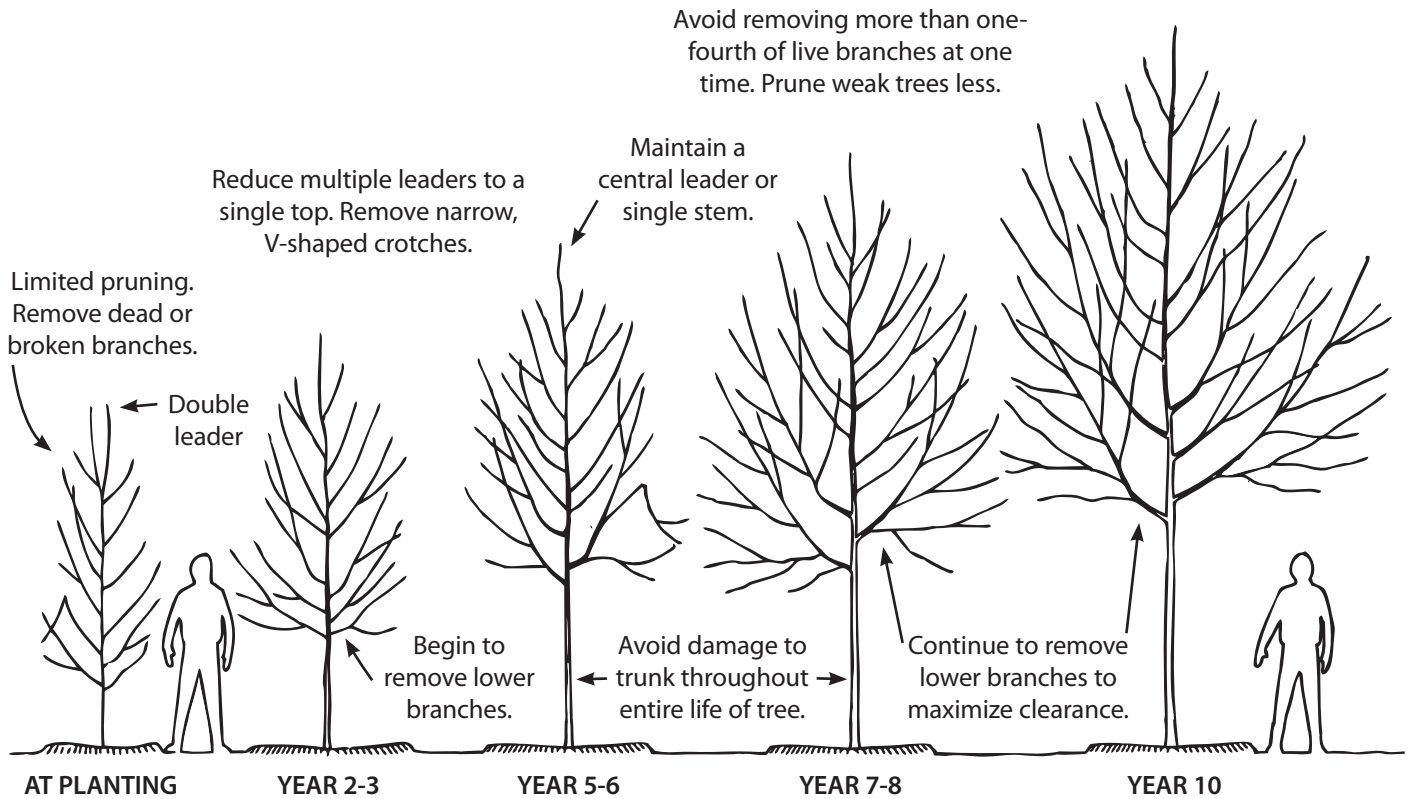
Newly planted trees should be staked **only** if they are loose in the root ball or in high-wind planting sites. Established trees may need staking if root damage occurs. Staking should be removed after one growing season. See *How to Plant a Tree* for specific instructions on how to properly stake a tree.

Pruning Guidelines

The best time to prune a tree is when it is young. Pruning at an early age is much cheaper and easier to do than after it becomes large. Prune only broken or dead branches at planting time. Once a tree becomes

established, you should begin pruning the structure of the tree to eliminate multiple leaders (limbs that rub against one another) or to raise the canopy. Understanding the typical size and shape of your tree is

very important. Structural pruning and pruning of large trees should be performed by a professional arborist. See *Basic Pruning Guidelines* for more information on how to prune properly.



Prune young trees gradually, as shown in the illustration above.



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