

Leaf Notes

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CARPENTER ANTS AND THEIR DAMAGE

Carpenter ants seem to catch the eye of homeowners when running up and down tree trunks and across landscapes. Worker ants are normally black, or red and black in color and range in size from 3/8 to 1/2 inch. Winged queen ants may be as large as one inch. It is very common to find carpenter ant nests inside of trees, especially older ones that have cavities or a significant amount of dead wood scattered in the canopy. The moist, weak wood creates a perfect location to establish or increase colony size.

While the work of these ants seems to be damaging to a tree's health, they actually are not. Ants are only taking advantage of an area of decay inside a tree's structure. Carpenter ants use knots, cracks, holes and even old insect tunnels to gain access to trees. Control of this pest is not essential for the health of the tree since they do not kill healthy tree tissue. But the carpenter ants are an indicator that your tree has a cavity large enough to hold a population of ants. It is also possible for ant colonies to spread to adjacent wood decay or even your home as they outgrow their existing nest. This is why it is important to reduce carpenter ant habitat in your landscape, by removing old tree and shrub stumps as well as trimming tree limbs that come in contact to your home, roof or wires that lead to your home. Sealing tree cavities or treating wounds with tree dressing is not advised. These treatments are unnecessary and have been found to trap moisture and increase the rate of decay and cavity development which ants are attracted to.



Controlling ant populations in trees can be very difficult. A single treatment is unlikely to permanently get rid of carpenter ants, so retreatment may be necessary. However, even if the population has been successfully controlled, over time new ant colonies from adjacent properties seeking to expand their population may use an old ant cavity as a new home. Thus multiple treatments may be needed, as well as periodic retreatment's every other year.

If you have been startled by large ants roaming across your property or want to know how to protect your landscape investment from carpenter ants, please contact your arborist for proper ant identification and treatment methods.

TREE REMOVAL: BY HAND OR BY CRANE?

When it comes to removing a large tree, it can be dismantled solely by manpower or a crane can be brought in to help with the removal process. When most people hear that we would like to use a crane, the first thing they think is "expensive." That is not actually true. There are many benefits to using a crane. First, it makes the job more efficient, which actually helps keep the overall cost of the job down. What a four-man tree crew can accomplish in two or three days, the same tree crew using a crane, can get done in one day. This leads to a reduced labor cost. How? The

crane allows the crew to cut out large sections of a tree at one time, instead of having to be cut into a lot of smaller pieces. The crane allows those large pieces to be placed out by the street, where they can be immediately chipped-up or loaded into a truck and hauled away. A removal that is done solely by manpower would require smaller sections to be cut from the tree and lowered straight down. It would then need to be cut into even smaller sections and carried by hand or by ball cart out to the street to process. The crane also makes the job much safer. If a tree is dead and decayed, the tree can be brittle and unpredictable.

TREE REMOVAL, CONT.

A brittle tree could fall apart while the crew is climbing and cutting. With the crane there is no undue stress placed on the structure of a dead and brittle tree, so it is much safer for the climber as well as the client's landscape. So using a crane can lead to a less expensive, safer removal. The next time you have a big tree that needs to be removed, remember to discuss using a crane with your Arborist, it could be very helpful in the long run.



MY TREE IS THINNING!!!

The most common causes of thinning trees are fungal disease, drought, insect attacks and root disturbance.

Several fungal diseases cause partial defoliation and in severe cases total defoliation. Many trees drop leaves when severely infected. The most common fungal disease is Leaf Spot, which you will often see in flowering cherries. Defoliation is also seen in sycamore, beech and ash by anthracnose disease. The good news is that these diseases can be controlled with fungicide sprays applied during the infectious period.

Drought will also cause trees to thin. Many species of trees react to this stress by dropping their oldest leaves, as is commonly seen with willows and yellow poplar trees. Trees that drop their leaves due to lack of water will show their fall color.

Insect infestation by tent caterpillars, gypsy moths and Japanese beetles, for example, will eat the leaves. However,

scale insects cause damage by nutrient and water loss, which in turn cause the leaves to discolor and thin. Borer insects cut the flow of water and nutrients by eating tree tissue or spreading fungi that plug the tree tissue. Damage by borers will often be visible on the branches in the upper canopy before moving to lower parts of the tree. Borers will often target severely stressed trees.

Root disturbance is often overlooked as a cause of tree thinning. Trees that have had their root systems damaged will show decline by thinning in the upper canopy. Root damage is caused by soil compaction resulting from equipment, digging in the root zone, and changes in drainage that has caused water to either stay on-site or to leave the landscape before it can soak in. The damage may not become apparent for two-to-five years after the disturbance. Damaged root systems allow for an attack by root decay fungi, exacerbating the direct damage from the initial compacting event. Compromised root systems also tend to become apparent during periods of water stress.

If you notice defoliation past 30% in your tree, please contact your arborist. A visit by our Certified Arborist will determine if a thinning tree is in need of treatment and what kind of treatment would be beneficial.



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