

# Sperry Tree Care

NEWSLETTER

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Autumn  
2025

### WELCOME TO OUR AUTUMN NEWSLETTER!

Fall has arrived, and with it comes crisp mornings, cozy sweaters, and a spectacular show of colors in every tree and shrub.

At Sperry Tree Care, we love this time of year—not just for the beauty of the season, but for the chance to help you care for the trees that make your landscape so special. In this newsletter, we'll share tips on keeping your trees healthy through the cooler months, explain some of the fascinating changes happening in your yard, and offer advice to make the most of this colorful, cozy season.

# Autumn Tree Care



## WHAT THOSE FALL COLORS REALLY MEAN

As the days grow shorter and cooler, our trees put on one of nature's most beautiful shows — the brilliant reds, oranges, and golds of autumn. But those colors are more than just decoration; they tell a story about what's happening inside the tree.

During spring and summer, leaves are busy at work turning sunlight into energy through photosynthesis. Chlorophyll — the pigment that gives leaves their green color — is essential for that process. As daylight fades and temperatures drop, trees prepare for winter by slowing down food production. The chlorophyll begins to break down, revealing pigments that were hidden all along.

The yellows and golds come from **carotenoids**, which are present in leaves throughout the growing season. The bright reds and purples appear when sugars get trapped in the leaf and react with other compounds to form **anthocyanins**. The combination of these pigments, along with the tree species and weather patterns, determines the palette we see each fall.

Cool nights and sunny days tend to produce the most vibrant colors — while heavy rain or early frost can dull them. Some trees, like maples and sweetgums, show off deep reds and purples; others, like aspens and birches, turn clear golden yellow. Oaks often fade to a rich bronze.



As leaves change and eventually fall, they're part of the tree's preparation for dormancy. Dropping leaves reduces water loss and protects the tree from winter damage. In other words, those glowing colors are the tree's graceful way of saying, *"See you in spring."*

When you admire the autumn colors this year, you're witnessing a vital transition — a moment of both beauty and biology that helps trees rest, recover, and get ready for another growing season.

# Early Leaf Drop

## WHY SOME TREES DROP THEIR LEAVES EARLY

Have you ever noticed a tree turning color and shedding its leaves weeks before its neighbors? While it might seem random, early leaf drop is often a sign that something is happening beneath the surface.

### 1. Weather Stress

Extended heat, drought, or sudden temperature swings can cause trees to lose leaves early. When conditions are dry, trees close their leaf pores (stomata) to conserve water, and if stress continues, they shed leaves altogether to reduce water loss.

### 2. Root or Soil Issues

Compacted soil, construction damage, or poor drainage can limit how much water and oxygen reach a tree's roots. Since roots are the foundation of tree health, stress below ground often shows up above — like early color change or thinning foliage.

### 3. Insects and Disease

Pests such as aphids, mites, or borers can weaken trees and trigger premature defoliation. Likewise, fungal infections like anthracnose or leaf spot cause browning and early leaf loss, especially during damp summers.

### 4. Overcrowding and Competition

In dense landscapes, trees may drop leaves early if they're competing for sunlight or nutrients. This is especially common in young urban or suburban plantings where roots have limited space.

### 5. Natural Behavior

Some species — such as black walnuts, horse chestnuts, and some birches — are naturally early to drop their leaves. It's part of their rhythm, helping them conserve resources before the first frost.

### What You Can Do

If one of your trees is dropping leaves early, take a closer look.

When in doubt, our certified arborists can assess whether early leaf drop is a harmless quirk or a sign of deeper stress. Sometimes, a little attention now can prevent larger problems later.

# Leaf Drop & Soil Health

## FEEDING YOUR SOIL NATURALLY

As autumn settles in and leaves begin to fall, many homeowners rush to rake them away. But those fallen leaves aren't just seasonal clutter — they're a key part of nature's recycling system, helping nourish the very soil that trees depend on.

### The Natural Cycle

In forests, no one removes the leaves. They break down slowly over winter, forming a rich layer of organic matter known as **leaf litter**. This layer protects roots from freezing, holds in moisture, and feeds the countless microorganisms that keep soil alive and fertile. Over time, decomposed leaves become **humus**, improving soil structure and boosting its ability to retain water and nutrients.

### Why It Matters for Urban Trees

In residential settings, where leaves are often removed, trees lose that natural return of nutrients. Soil in urban landscapes tends to be compacted, low in organic matter, and less biologically active — conditions that make it harder for roots to thrive. Allowing some leaf matter to stay and decompose, or using it as mulch, helps restore balance and mimics the forest floor environment trees evolved with.

### Smart Leaf Management

You don't have to leave a thick mat of wet leaves on your lawn. Instead:

- **Mulch them:** Shred leaves with a mower and spread them under trees and shrubs as a light mulch layer.
- **Compost them:** Blend leaves with grass clippings or garden debris to create nutrient-rich compost.
- **Leave some wild:** In less visible areas, consider letting leaves decompose naturally — your trees, soil microbes, and beneficial insects will thank you.

### The Bottom Line

Leaf drop isn't the end of the growing season — it's part of a continuous cycle of renewal. When you let fallen leaves return to the soil, you're not just tidying up for winter — you're feeding the ecosystem from the ground up, one leaf at a time.



# Fall & Winter Pruning

## WHY FALL & WINTER ARE PERFECT FOR PRUNING

As the vibrant colors of fall fade and winter approaches, many homeowners think their trees are “done” for the season. But in fact, these cooler months are an ideal time for pruning — and here’s why.

### 1. Trees Are Dormant

During fall and winter, most deciduous trees enter dormancy, slowing growth and conserving energy. Pruning at this time minimizes stress and allows cuts to heal more efficiently once spring growth begins.

### 2. Easier to See Structure

With leaves gone, the branches and overall structure of the tree are clearly visible. This makes it easier to identify dead, diseased, or crossing branches, and to shape the tree safely and effectively.

### 3. Safety and Convenience

Fallen leaves and dormant trees make for safer work conditions. Fewer branches obstruct sightlines, and pruning without a full canopy reduces the chance of accidental damage to surrounding plants or property.

### 4. Promote Strong Growth in Spring

Removing weak, damaged, or crowded branches before the growing season allows the tree to focus energy on healthy new growth when the weather warms. This leads to stronger, more resilient trees.

### What Certified Arborists are looking for:

- Weak or damaged branches.
- Hazardous materials that could lead to future property damage.
- Leaning trees or unstable root systems.
- Tree form and balance.
- Signs of drought or water stress
- Conflicts with power lines or other structures

Fall and winter aren’t just downtime for trees — they’re an opportunity. Proper pruning now sets your trees up for healthier, stronger growth in spring while keeping your landscape safe and beautiful.

# Leaf It to Us

## WHAT IS A WILDLIFE SNAG?

### Supporting Nature in Your Yard

A snag is a standing dead or dying tree. While it may look lifeless, it's actually teeming with ecological value. Birds, mammals, insects and fungi all rely on snags for nesting, shelter, and food. Woodpeckers, owls, bats, and even squirrels may use a snag, and the decaying wood supports insects that feed the rest of the ecosystem.

Creating a wildlife snag is a small change with a big impact. By safely maintaining a standing dead or declining tree, you provide crucial habitat, promote biodiversity, and let nature thrive – all while still keeping your property safe and beautiful

Our arborists can answer all your questions and develop a plan for your wildlife snag.



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