

HANDS-ON LANDOWNER INVOLVEMENT AT ROOT OF HEALTHY TREES

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Planting a tree is a great commitment and investment to the next generation.

Doing so provides shade, wind protection, increases air quality, provides wildlife habitat and soil stabilization, helps with flood control and improves water quality.

Trees are a long-term investment. They need continued care. In the arid west specifically they need supplemental water and oftentimes nutrients. But they also need structural and maintenance pruning throughout their lives, which can be up to 150 years for some of Wyoming's native trees.

A homeowner should plan the overall landscape of their site based upon the tree's mature size.

Any homeowner or land manager with basic training can learn to prune young trees for structure and form. For pruning tips and suggestions, visit the National Arbor Day Foundation at <https://www.arborday.org> and click on Trees then Planting and Care, or contact your local extension office for pruning training opportunities and information.

Properly pruned trees provide savings in future care. For example, properly pruned trees are less likely to sustain massive tree damage from storms.

Let's look at an example. Two neighbors plant the same variety of a tree in similar spots in their yards but only one did the necessary watering and otherwise forgot about that tree. The other neighbor additionally committed to annual pruning to develop a strong central leader in the tree and well-spaced scaffold branches up and around the trunk.

The second homeowner did the tree and themselves a favor. A strong central leader and well-spaced scaffold branches enable the tree to likely withstand strong Wyoming winds as well as the heavy, wet snows in the spring or the fall when the tree still has leaves.

Eventually, the homeowner will age to the point of not wanting to climb the mature height of their tree and

The key to keeping maintenance costs lower in the mature tree is to ensure proper pruning for structure and form in the young tree and ensuring the trees receive care after major storms or following any damage that occurs.

will rely on others for tree care. Hopefully, a licensed and certified arborist will perform the tree care rather than the average Joe with a ladder and a chainsaw.

Hiring a tree care professional is not inexpensive but is rather another investment into the tree's longevity.

A well-educated, trained and insured tree care professional, or arborist, can provide a detailed estimate of the work they recommend and provide proof of insurance. In some towns, they will be able to show they are licensed to work in the community and should be able to show their most seasoned employees have been designated certified arborists by one of the professional associations of arborists. They should be able to explain what equipment will be necessary and what safety equipment they will use. They should also talk to you about you staying safe while the work is performed.

As a general rule a mature tree shorter than 25 feet will cost \$200 to \$750 to prune. Trees 30 to 60 feet tall will range from \$400 to \$1,250. Trees over 60 feet tall will require \$750 to more than \$2,000 to prune.

Tree removal may have additional fees and require additional workers to ensure branches do not fall on structures, damage surrounding gardens or yard landscaping, and prevent injuries to workers or residents. Removal costs will most likely be greater than pruning.

If the tree is not accessible with equipment, cranes or lift trucks may be needed to access the work area and remove debris. All of this adds to the complexity of the work.

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