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Tips and trends for homeowners, buyers and sellers

How to Prune Your Trees



Pruning trees is crucial to maintaining a healthy and beautiful landscape. Knowing when and how to trim can significantly impact your trees' overall health and longevity. Here are some tips to help you prune your trees effectively.

► **Identify the goals:** Before cutting anything, determine the purpose. Whether it's to remove dead or diseased branches, shape the tree for better growth or improve sunlight penetration, understanding your goals will guide your pruning decisions.

► **Pay attention to timing:** The best time to prune trees depends on the species. For most trees, late winter or early spring, before new growth begins, is ideal. However, some trees, such as spring-flowering varieties, should be pruned after they bloom to avoid cutting off flower buds.

► **Use the right tools:** Use sharp, clean pruning tools to make precise cuts and minimize damage to the tree. Pruning shears are suitable for smaller branches, while a pruning saw may be necessary for larger ones.

► **Follow proper techniques:** When pruning, cut just outside the branch collar, the swollen area where the branch meets the trunk. Avoid leaving stubs or making flush cuts, as these can lead to decay and disease.

► **Consider professional help:** For larger trees or complex pruning needs, think about hiring a professional arborist. They have the expertise and equipment to prune trees safely and effectively.

DIY Gutter Cleaning Tips

Maintaining clean gutters is essential for protecting your home from water damage and ensuring proper drainage. Here are some tips to help you clean your gutters effectively and safely.



1 Ensure safety: Before starting, confirm you have a stable ladder and someone to spot you. Wear gloves and safety goggles to protect your hands and eyes from debris and potential splashes.

2 Gather supplies: A sturdy ladder, a gutter scoop or trowel, a bucket or garbage bag for debris and a hose with a nozzle attachment are essential tools for gutter cleaning.

3 Clear debris: Start by removing large debris such as leaves,

twigs and dirt from the gutters using the scoop or trowel. Place the debris into the bucket or bag for disposal.

4 Flush the gutters: After removing the larger debris, use the hose to flush out the gutters, starting from the end opposite the downspout. This will help remove any remaining dirt and ensure proper water flow.

5 Check downspouts: Make sure the downspouts are clear of obstructions. Use a plumber's

snake or a hose to flush out any clogs. Consider installing gutter guards to prevent future clogs.

6 Inspect for damage: While cleaning, look for any signs of damage, such as rust, holes or sagging. Repair or replace damaged sections to maintain proper functionality.

7 Provide regular maintenance: Aim to clean your gutters at least twice a year, in the spring and fall, to prevent clogs and water damage.

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Tips and trends for homeowners, buyers and sellers

Adding a Skylight to Your Home

Skylights can be a beautiful addition to any home, offering natural light and a unique architectural feature. However, before deciding to install one, it's essential to weigh the pros and cons to determine if it's the right choice for your home.



PROS

- ▶ **Natural light:** Skylights can brighten up dark spaces and reduce the need for artificial lighting during the day, potentially lowering energy costs.
- ▶ **Aesthetic appeal:** Skylights can enhance the overall look of a room, creating a more open and spacious feel.
- ▶ **Increased ventilation:** Some skylights can be opened to allow for natural ventilation, improving indoor air quality and freshening up the room.
- ▶ **Health benefits:** Exposure to natural light has been linked to improved mood, productivity and sleep patterns.

CONS

- ▶ **High cost:** Skylights can be expensive to install, especially if structural changes are needed to accommodate them.
- ▶ **Potential leaks:** Improper installation or maintenance can lead to leaks, which can cause water damage and require costly repairs.
- ▶ **Heat gain/loss:** Skylights can contribute to heat gain in the summer and heat loss in the winter, potentially impacting energy efficiency.
- ▶ **Glare and UV exposure:** Depending on the positioning and size, skylights can cause glare and increase UV exposure, which can fade furniture and flooring.

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