



Prunin' Time

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Winter will soon be upon us with all of her fury, so it's time to think about pruning the trees on the course. The most obvious reasons for trimming trees are to clean out deadwood, improve clearance for golf clubs and open fairways for the flight of the golf ball. Removing deadwood from trees not only renders the trees healthier, but also makes them safer in high winds—sparing you too much to clean up after a good wind, too! Elevating the low branches to make swinging the golf club easier, and cutting back certain trees from fairways, could be interpreted as removing some of the challenges posed by the golf course, but on the other hand, a tree's growth habits can sometimes make a hole downright unfair.

Less obvious reasons for tree trimming exist, too, and I'll discuss a couple of these now. American elms are one of Mother Nature's most beautiful creations. They should have their deadwood removed even

more frequently than most trees. The reason: the elm bark beetle, one of culprits in the spread of Dutch elm disease, is attracted to the odor given off by dead elm wood. If the trees are free of deadwood, the beetles are far more likely to keep on trucking to the next victim.

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Certain species, such as Norway maples and lindens, become so thick in growth habit that it is very difficult to grow grass under them. These trees should be thinned out every couple of years so the grass can

get a little more sunlight. If you have just too darn many of these sun-robbing trees than your budget can handle, mulching under them with wood chips is one solution. Wood chips are not the nicest surface from which to hit a golf ball, but they are better than mud.

Winter is also the best time of year for shrub pruning. Whether you are just thinning shrubs and removing the older canes or whacking them right down to the ground to rejuvenate older shrubs, now is the best time.

With the ground becoming quite hard now, tree guys can get out on your course with their bucket trucks with minimal damage. We can also remove large trees without tearing everything up. Unlike the winter of '97, when the ground never did freeze, we can hope for dropping temperatures—cold weather will go far towards keeping insect populations down next year. Good luck and good trimming—spring will be here before we know it! 