

Plant Health Care

Learn what plant health care means, what its implementation involves, and how trees and shrubs benefit from it.



Proper plant health involves monitoring and using preventative treatments to ensure your trees stay healthy. Discolored leaves, dead branches, or early leaf drop are all symptoms that may require contacting an arborist.

Sometimes the cause of concern is a minor problem, other times the problem is more complex and requires a remedy. Unfortunately, if the problem has gone undetected for too long, removal may be the only option.

The Solution: Plant Health Care

To give property owners more options, arborists created Plant Health Care (PHC) programs. The objective of PHC is to maintain or improve the landscape's appearance, vitality, and safety using the most effective and environmentally sensitive practices and treatments available. PHC involves routine monitoring, preventive treatment, and a working relationship between the arborist and the property owner.

Why Plant Health Care, Not Tree Health Care?

Trees share your home's landscape with turfgrasses, shrubs, and other plants, all of which are bedded in the same soil. The roots of all the plants intermingle and compete for water and nutrients. The roots of a single mature tree may extend well into your lawn or flower beds.

Every treatment applied to the lawn can impact the appearance and vitality of a tree. Conversely, treatments applied to a tree can influence the appearance and vitality of the underlying turfgrass. The care of each plant in a landscape can affect the health of every plant in the landscape.

What Does a Tree and Shrub PHC Program Cover?

Just like no two landscapes are the same, and client objectives can vary, there is no standard PHC program; however, PHC programs have common features.

PHC involves monitoring tree and shrub health, which allows for problems to be detected and managed before they become serious. The monitoring may be as simple as annual visits or it may involve monthly or more frequent inspections of your trees and shrubs. The monitoring frequency and complexity of your PHC program depends on the size and diversity of your landscape, as well as your particular landscape goals.

If a problem or potential problem is detected during a monitoring visit, your arborist will work with you to develop a solution such as reducing lawn irrigation frequency so soil conditions aren't too moist for tree roots.

Other solutions include more detailed suggestions, such as pruning or spot applications of pesticides. Your arborist will provide you with information about your trees and shrubs that will let you make appropriate management decisions for your budget and goals.



Why Contact an Arborist for Plant Health Care?

- Arborists have the experience and training to detect potential tree and shrub problems before they become life-threatening or hazardous.
- Arborists can prescribe services for trees and shrubs to prevent problems.
- Arborists can consult with other landscape and lawn care services to coordinate treatments.

The size and longevity of trees and shrubs warrant special attention. Annual plants can be replaced in a few short weeks and a lawn in a single growing season, but it can take a lifetime to replace a mature tree.

How to Choose an Arborist

Visit TreesAreGood.org and use the “Find an Arborist” tool to locate an arborist in your area. You can also check with professional organizations, such as the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), the Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA), or the American Society of Consulting Arborists (ASCA).

Ask for proof of insurance and references, and don't hesitate to check them. Remember, tree care is a substantial, long-lasting investment in your valuable assets; take the time to select a knowledgeable professional to care for your landscape.



What Will a PHC Program Cost?

Because each program is individually designed to fit the needs of a particular landscape, accurate pricing will depend on findings from an arborist's site visit and assessment. You may have an interest in developing a plan for a few key trees in your landscape, or have the entire landscape placed on a program.

PHC programs can also be structured in different ways. For example, some programs charge a fee for monitoring and bill each treatment separately. Other programs have an annual fee that covers all monitoring visits for the season as well as many potential treatments. These more comprehensive programs provide peace of mind in knowing that treatments for most potential problems are already covered by the program without additional charges. Individualized programs and flexibility are at the heart of PHC. You will find that your arborist can design a Plant Health Care program that fits your goals and budget.

What Is a Certified Arborist?

ISA Certified Arborists® are individuals who have proven a level of knowledge in the art and science of tree care through experience and by passing a comprehensive examination developed by some of the nation's leading experts on tree care. ISA Certified Arborists must also continue their education to maintain their certification. Therefore, they are more likely to be up to date on the latest techniques in arboriculture.

Finding an Arborist

Visit TreesAreGood.org for free tools and to read all brochures in this series.

- The “Find an Arborist” tool can help you locate an arborist in your area.
- The “Verify a Credential” tool enables you to confirm whether an arborist has an ISA credential.



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