

top 12 tips for happy, healthy trees

leaf & limb
HEALTHY TREES. HAPPY PEOPLE.





My name is Basil Camu. I care for trees because I love our planet.

I'm not the only one. I'm part of a community of Treecologists who share this common purpose. Our goal is to increase the health and population of trees to overcome pressing environmental issues and restore the balance of life on Earth. To attain this vision, we preserve, plant, and promote trees in a manner that maximizes positive benefits for members of all ecosystems.

Why? Because life on earth is hurting.

We're seeing a decrease in biodiversity, rise of air pollution, loss of our topsoil, disappearing drinking water, and an increase in oxidized carbon in our atmosphere—just to name a few. Lucky for us, trees are one of Nature's most powerful tools for creating a healthy planet. So let's do what Nature does; **let's grow lots and lots of healthy trees.**

We cannot achieve this without your help. We need more Treecologists to join our cause. The first step on this journey is to learn how to properly plant trees and responsibly care for existing trees.

For this reason, we created this booklet. These are our *Top 12 Tips for Healthy, Happy Trees*, in no particular order.

Healthy trees in abundance create happy people and a vibrant planet.

Basil Camu





ONE

Before you plant a tree, make sure the species is suited to grow in that location and will have enough space (soil and air) to reach its mature size without impediments.

A close-up photograph of a young tree trunk. The trunk is light green and has a distinct root collar at its base. The tree is planted in a bed of dark brown mulch. To the right of the tree, a black plastic nursery pot is visible, partially obscured by the mulch. The background is blurred, showing more of the garden setting.


TWO

When you plant, make sure the root collar (the base of the trunk that spreads into roots) is at or above the surrounding grade.



THREE

When pruning, always have a goal in mind. Pruning without one is like building a house with no plan. Good structure is the most important goal because structure is strength.



FOUR

When pruning, always make cuts just outside of the branch collar, which is located at the base of the branch and is the only place on the tree that can properly “heal” (technically trees compartmentalize wounds) and keep decay out.

FIVE

When selecting what tree to plant, use native or near-native species.

Trees that are native are often more resistant to disease, withstand drought, and contribute to the local ecosystem.



SIX

Arborist wood chips are a great, easy way to care for your tree. Place them around your tree every year. Avoid piling mulch on the root collar. This is called a mulch volcano and is very harmful to the plant. The wood chips should be about 3-6 inches deep.

Pro tip: You can get arborist wood chips for free from any local tree service.



SEVEN

Leave the leaves. Leaf litter is part of a tree's life cycle. It is nature's way of recycling essential nutrients to build soil and tree health. Leaf litter also serves as food and protection for many creatures such as moths, bumble bees, toads, birds, and butterflies, to name just a few.



EIGHT

Think twice before using traditional chemical fertilizers. These products can give your plants an immediate boost, but in the long term can be very harmful to your trees, soil, and ecosystem.



NINE

Avoid using pesticides. Any treatment should be targeted to a specific pest and should use the most ecosystem-friendly approach possible. This often begins with addressing the underlying health issues of your tree or shrub.



TEN

Focus on soil health—it is the foundation for healthy trees and shrubs. If you want to improve the soil, make sure it does not get compacted and has plenty of space for water and air. Each year, add organic matter or rotting stuff like leaf compost, mulch, or wood chips. Leave the leaves when they fall. Avoid destroying the soil biology with chemicals such as herbicides.



ELEVEN


Let the insects eat too! Some pest damage to a tree is normal. There is a point when insects go from being a normal part of the ecosystem to being a threat to your plant. This is called threshold. Unless the insect damage has crossed that threshold, you don't need to treat it. Just let it be.





TWELVE

When in doubt about what to do, look at trees in the forest. How are they growing and thriving? Use your observations to experiment, and have fun!



Want to learn more about how to responsibly care for trees, properly plant trees, or become a Treecologist?

Sign-up for Treecologist 101: the Fundamentals of Tree Care

Every two weeks, we'll send you an in-depth email about a specific topic including:

- Basic pruning tips,
- The importance of soil,
- How fungi can help your tree,
- Why trees are essential to the health of our planet,
- and other tree-related fundamentals.

Sign up here:

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