

Pruning Post Oak And Black Jack Oak Trees In The Southern Cross Timbers

The post oak tree and the black jack oak tree have a diffuse tree limb canopy. The post oak tree more so than the black jack oak. The root systems of these trees are diffuse as well. The post oak again leads in this characteristic.

These diffuse post oak and black jack oak tree canopy and root growth characteristics set these species of trees apart from other species of oaks and other trees.

Mature post oak trees in absence of interference of other trees or shrubs within their root zone seldom require pruning.

Compare this to a mature live oak tree that requires pruning every two years to reduce canopy density for aesthetics and to allow sun light to turf grass.

Post oak and black jack oak trees require pruning when -

The lower limbs need pruned to allow human traffic to walk under the canopy of the tree.

When physical damage has occurred.

In nature areas when tree limbs have become non-vital as a result of briar or grapevine in the canopy, privet or any other species of fast growing, soil drying

trees within the root zone causing stress and early die off of tree limbs in the canopy. With briar and grapevine it is usually the lower limbs that are affected

most. With privet and invasive species trees the whole canopy and tree are affected.

In managed turf grass areas, both public and private property, where different and

faster growing species of trees and shrubs have shaded or encroached the native

oaks' root system resulting in the native oaks' tree roots to resuspend and

reduce

water intake on the side of the tree with the offending plant.

In areas adjacent to structures where pruning is required to allow space between

the tree limbs and the structure. Post oaks and black jack oak trees have a tendency to slow their tree limb growth and the limbs die off when the limbs come in contact with structures.

In the last four decades tree pruning guideline recommendations have been simplified. The factors needed to take into consideration have remained the same since the beginning of vegetation management practices.

In pruning trees the primary considerations are -

When to prune.

To seal the pruning cut or not to seal the cut.

The characteristics of the species of tree.

Soil conditions.

Climate conditions, heat, drought and moisture.

Whether undesirable microbes are present in the area.

The Southern Cross Timbers is a dry, hot climate. Post oak and black oak trees are hardwood, dry, slow growing trees. Prune a limb of significant size and within a few weeks splits or cracks occur as wide as 3/8" or more on the branch of origin. These cracks allow an avenue for bacteria, virus or fungus to land and spread on and in the tree cut wound where wood water/carbohydrate are food for these microbes.

These microbes, especially fungus, are prevalent in the southern cross timbers due to fertilizing lawn turf too early in the year using quick release nitrogen. This allows fungus to grow on still dormant lawns. Professional lawn cutters mowing lawns with fungus spore contaminated equipment and the increased prevalence of fungus susceptible cedar elm trees with root characteristics that dry out soils cause stress to adjacent vegetation.

In post oak woodland nature preserves where invasive species vines, trees

and shrubs have stressed the native post oaks over a number of years removal of the plants offensive to post oaks needs to occur.

Once the pioneer / invasive species plants have been removed it is noticed that there has been post oak lower tree limb die off from stress and lack of sunlight to the lower limbs of these trees.

In some cases there can be many limbs that have become non-vital causing stress to the tree in an attempt to detach the non-vital limbs from the tree trunk.

These areas where the dead limb and tree trunk meet are an avenue for insects, especially ants, and microbes to enter the trees.

The best time for pruning and sealing in these situations is as soon as possible.

The consideration of the attached dead limbs and stress on the tree has more weight than the consideration for season or time of year to prune trees.

Post oak and black jack oak trees are hardwood trees. Their tree wood does not absorb pruning cement. The pruning cement does not soften the tree wood.

This, along with the hot dry climate, reduces susceptibility to disease during the sealed tree pruning cut healing process.

Treekote Tree Wound Dressing and roofing cement, not roofing tar, have been used successfully to seal off tree pruning wounds in the hot, dry climate of the Southern Cross Timbers.

There are additional related products available at local grain and feed stores.

Pruning paint from an aerosol can has not shown to be applied thick enough to cover the pruning cut so as it not to have an exposed wood split/crack at the prune sight.

In turf grass managed areas on homeowner lawns and commercial properties where different species of trees and shrubs are adjacent to the native post oak tree there will be times that post oak tree limbs die off on the side of the tree of the other species of plant.

The post oak limbs that die off should be pruned to the limb of origin and sealed with Treekote or roofing cement.

Any live limbs that require pruning should be approached with the same guidelines.

Black jack oak trees are a dryer tree than the post oak. Pruning cement has a tendency to come disadhered from the application site.

If this happens reapplication is necessary to avoid a place for insects, especially ants, to enter the tree.