

David Hallauer
District Extension Agent
Crops & Soils/Horticulture

Volunteer Tree Control – Use Caution

Sometimes, a tree doesn't fit. Maybe it grew unexpectedly in a flower bed/lawn. Maybe it's an undesirable species in a wooded or landscape area. Removal may well be the best option – and this time of year is a good time to do it – so long as you keep a couple of cautions in mind.

First, remember that most deciduous trees will re-sprout after cutting. Elm, Oak, Hackberry, Hedge, and others will either have to be dug up or the cut stump treated with a herbicide after cutting, or you run the risk of the tree coming back from the root system next season. Removal isn't always as simple as lopping it off at ground level.

Second, know how and where the tree is growing. Trees sprouting from seed may be easily removed by digging or pulling with minimal damage to other vegetation. This is especially important when undesirable trees are growing among desirable vegetation or other trees that could potentially be damaged by cut stump applications. If they aren't growing among other trees or desirable vegetation, they are also fairly easily controlled with cut stump herbicides.

Trees growing from existing woody plant root systems will not be as easily dug and cut stump applications can hurt the source plant and surrounding woody vegetation. Whether they are from a root sucker or are root grafted, herbicide treatments applied after cutting will likely cause damage or death to the host tree. Continuous cutting may be your only control option.

Cut stump treatments are an effective and often needed method of keeping resprouting trees at bay. Before you do so, however, make sure you know where that tree is growing from as well as the potential for damage to surrounding vegetation if cut stump treatment is utilized.

In all cases, read and follow label directions. Cut stump treatments work well as long as applications are made when temperatures are above freezing.