

Spring Pruning Window for NYC Trees: What to Cut in March and April

Quick reference guide by Dragonetti Green Leaf Tree Care NY

Best NYC pruning window

Mid-February through third week of March. Late dormancy, before bud break, before sap rise.

Prune in March

Honey locust, London plane, pin/red oak (before April 1), linden, Norway/silver maple (early), ginkgo, zelkova.

April pruning rules

Limit to deadwood, hazard cuts, light corrections, spring-flowering ornamentals AFTER bloom.

Oaks — April 1 to October 31

NO pruning. Oak wilt risk via sap beetles. NYS DEC + ISA recommendation. Emergencies must seal wounds.

Maples — heavy bleeders

Sugar/silver/Norway/red maple bleed heavily Feb-April. Prune in true dormancy (Nov-Feb) or mid-summer.

Birch and walnut

Same as maple. Bleed in spring. Push to summer.

Fruit trees

Apple/pear: late winter. Peach: mid-March. Cherry/plum: summer after harvest, not spring.

Maximum pruning per year

25% of live crown max on healthy trees. 10-15% on trees over 50 years old. No topping or lion-tailing.

Street tree permits

DPR permit required regardless of season. Submit Jan-Feb for spring work.

After-bloom ornamentals

Cherry, magnolia, crabapple, dogwood: prune AFTER bloom finishes, not before.

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