

***Mistletoe Control***  
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**If athletes get athlete's foot, do astronauts get mistletoe?** I don't know about astronauts, but trees do get mistletoe. How do we get rid of it?

Mistletoe is a plant that grows on the stem of trees. It grows in clumps with green stems and leaves and small white berries. We use mistletoe in Christmas decorations, but be careful since the berries are toxic. Mistletoe is unusual in that it is a parasitic plant. It lives off food taken from the tree on which it is growing.

Mistletoe can weaken the tree, so should we remove it? Mistletoe has a haustoria or 'root' that is inside the stem on which it is growing. To completely remove the mistletoe, you must cut the limb off. Cut off the limb at a point at least eighteen inches towards the interior of the tree. This should remove all of the haustoria so the mistletoe will not re-grow.

This control method can be difficult since you must be careful not to leave stubs and must follow traditional tree pruning techniques. Do not 'top' trees since this destroys their shape and can make them at risk to lose limbs later. Contact your Extension Office or see our website for tree pruning information. Mistletoe is common on weak trees, so the best control may be to cut out mistletoes on small branches, improve overall tree health and to ignore those on large branches.