

## Mistletoe

Mistletoe is supposed to bring mystical powers which bring good luck. It has also been associated with love and friendship. But trees that have mistletoe will not have mystical powers or good luck just a slow death.

Mistletoe is a parasitic plant that absorbs both water and nutrients from a host tree. Healthy trees can tolerate a few mistletoe branch infections. However, if the infestation is severe, trees can weaken, have stunted growth or dead branches or die completely. Dead and dying limbs are a significant hazard. Remove branches at least a foot below the mistletoe attachment and before it produces seeds that will infest other limbs and trees.

Prune out mistletoe as soon as it appears.

For good control, remove branches at least 1 foot below the point of mistletoe attachment. Simply cutting off the mistletoe from trees can reduce spread, but will not provide control.

If it's not possible to remove the infested trunk or major branch, prune off the mistletoe and wrap the infested area of the tree with sturdy, black, polyethylene plastic secured with twine or tape to exclude light. Leave on for up to 2 years until the mistletoe dies, replacing plastic that becomes torn. As you can see, this would not be an easy task.

Remove trees that are too severely infested to prune back.

Although plant growth regulators temporarily remove mistletoe, these chemicals only provide short-term control and don't kill mistletoe plants.

A community effort is the best defense.

Since mistletoe spreads easily from one tree to another across property lines, removing mistletoe from all trees on the street will have the greatest benefit.

For more information about the UC Master Gardener program go to: [cecolusa.ucanr.edu](http://cecolusa.ucanr.edu)

For more information on pest and disease go to: [ipm.ucanr.edu](http://ipm.ucanr.edu)