ATHERTON TREES AND TREE FALL

Root systems differ by species, and that affects how a tree holds up in drought, heavy rain and wind. For all trees, root balls constricted by drought take three weeks to repropagate after sufficient rain.



Photo courtesy of Dan Collins

TREE	ROOT SYSTEM
Redwood	Shallow root systems extend over one hundred feet from the base, intertwining with the roots of other redwoods.
Oak	Lateral roots spread as much as 90 feet from the trunk, typically about 18 inches below the surface. Oak roots usually extend no more than 3 feet below the soil, and no more than 2 feet in shallow soil.
Pine	For most, roots extend down about 3 feet, but can go deeper in sandy, dry soils. The roots support the tree above ground and draw water and nutrients from the soil.
Maple	Some root systems are deep, while others sit just below the surface. The silver maple has one of the most intrusive root systems of all maples: large, with very strong roots that easily raise cement sidewalks and porches.
Acacia	Rugged and durable, a first-class erosion control plant for dry soils. It sets down a deep root system that reaches water far under the topsoil, anchoring the tree and stabilizing the soil.
Willow	Roots are aggressive, invasive and shallow, and can spread up to three times the distance from the trunk to the edge of the canopy. They often lie close to the surface, causing bumps in lawns, and can lift cement patios.
Magnolia	Large, flexible, rope-like roots that grow horizontally, not vertically, and stay relatively close to the surface. Planting magnolias near houses can lead to root damage.
Palm	A fibrous root system that is not deeply rooted. The roots spread over the soil like a mat and penetrate nearly 36 inches of topsoil. They keep the same girth however old or tall the palm grows.
Eucalyptus	About 90% of the roots grow in the top 12 to 16 inches of soil. Eucalyptus are very efficient at taking up water, and the roots can cause problems with house foundations and block drains around the house.

Updated from the handout “Atherton Trees and Tree Fall” by Tom Prussing, January 16, 2021.

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