

NEW BRUNSWICK LANDSCAPING

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# Trees & Shrubs

Pruning, planting, removal, disease treatment, and  
care for trees and shrubs in NB

17 Expert Answers from Landscape IQ

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## Best crabapple varieties for NB landscapes?

**Crabapple trees are excellent choices for New Brunswick landscapes, offering spring flowers, fall fruit, and four-season interest.** The key is selecting disease-resistant varieties that can handle our Zone 4-5 winters and Maritime humidity.

For New Brunswick conditions, focus on **disease-resistant cultivars** that won't succumb to the apple scab, fire blight, and powdery mildew that thrive in our humid Maritime climate. The best performers include **'Prairifire'** with its deep pink flowers and persistent red fruit, **'Royal Raindrops'** featuring purple foliage and bright pink blooms, and **'Sugar Tyme'** with fragrant white flowers and red fruit that birds love. **'Red Jewel'** stays compact at 8-10 feet, perfect for smaller properties, while **'Centurion'** offers excellent disease resistance and rose-red flowers.

**Size considerations are crucial** for NB landscapes. Full-size varieties like 'Prairifire' reach 20 feet, ideal for larger properties in Fredericton's river valley or Moncton's suburban areas. For tighter spaces common in Saint John's older neighborhoods, choose dwarf varieties like 'Red Jewel' or 'Sargent' crabapple, which stay under 10 feet. Semi-dwarf options like 'Sugar Tyme' (15 feet) work well for most residential lots.

**Timing your planting** matters significantly in our climate. Plant in **late May through early July** once soil has warmed and drainage improved after spring thaw. Fall planting works in September but gives less establishment time before winter. Choose a sunny location with good air circulation to prevent fungal diseases that plague crabapples in humid conditions.

**Soil preparation** is essential since most NB soils are acidic clay. Crabapples prefer slightly acidic to neutral soil (pH 6.0-7.0), so you may need lime application based on a soil test. In clay-heavy areas like the Saint John River valley, amend with compost and ensure drainage — crabapples hate wet feet. Sandy coastal soils need organic matter added for moisture retention.

**Maintenance requirements** are minimal with disease-resistant varieties. Prune in late winter to maintain shape and remove any diseased wood. Water deeply during establishment (first 2 years) and dry summers. Apply 2-3 inches of mulch around the base, keeping it away from the trunk to prevent rodent damage during our long winters.

**Fruit considerations** vary by variety. Some like 'Prairifire' hold fruit through winter, providing food for birds and winter interest. Others like 'Spring Snow' are fruitless, eliminating cleanup but also removing wildlife value. For most homeowners, persistent small fruit (under ½ inch) provides beauty without excessive mess.

**Avoid older varieties** like 'Hopa' or 'Almey' that are susceptible to diseases. These may look fine initially but often decline within 5-10 years in our humid climate, requiring expensive removal.

Need help finding a landscaper to properly plant and establish your crabapple? New Brunswick Landscaping can match you with experienced tree professionals who understand our unique growing conditions and can ensure your investment thrives for decades.

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Q2

## Best pruning shapes for ornamental trees?

**The best pruning shape depends on your tree species and landscape goals, but most ornamental trees thrive with a natural form that enhances their inherent beauty while maintaining structural integrity.**

For New Brunswick's climate, proper pruning shape is especially critical because our ice storms, heavy snow loads, and strong Maritime winds can devastate poorly structured trees. The key is working with each tree's natural growth habit rather than forcing unnatural shapes that create weak points.

**Natural form pruning** works best for most ornamental trees in NB. This means removing crossing branches, dead wood, and suckers while maintaining the tree's species-typical silhouette. Maples develop their classic rounded crown, birches keep their graceful weeping habit, and flowering crabs maintain their spreading form. This approach creates the strongest structure to handle our 250-300cm annual snowfall and periodic ice storms.

**Central leader training** suits trees like oaks, lindens, and honey locusts that naturally grow with a dominant central trunk. You'll maintain one main trunk extending to the top, with well-spaced lateral branches creating a Christmas tree-like framework. This shape sheds snow and ice effectively and provides excellent storm resistance. Remove competing leaders and keep branch spacing at least 18 inches apart vertically.

**Open center or vase shape** works well for flowering trees like serviceberry, redbud, or ornamental cherries. You'll remove the central leader at 6-8 feet and encourage 3-4 main scaffold branches to create an open, bowl-like crown. This allows excellent air circulation (important in our humid Maritime climate to prevent fungal diseases) and showcases spring blooms beautifully.

**Modified central leader** combines both approaches and suits many fruit trees and some ornamentals. You maintain a central trunk for the first 6-8 feet, then allow it to branch into several co-dominant stems. This provides good structure while creating an attractive, full crown.

**Timing matters significantly in New Brunswick.** Prune most deciduous ornamentals during dormancy (March is ideal when temperatures are above -10°C but buds haven't swollen). However, maples, birches, and walnuts should be pruned in late summer to avoid excessive bleeding. Never prune spring-flowering trees like lilacs or forsythia until after they bloom, or you'll remove this year's flowers.

**Avoid common shaping mistakes** that create problems in our climate. Don't top trees (cutting the main trunk), create lion's tailing (stripping interior branches), or make flush cuts that remove the branch collar. These practices create weak wood, disease entry points, and structures that fail under snow load.

For complex pruning or valuable specimen trees, hiring a certified arborist ensures proper technique and timing. New Brunswick Landscaping can connect you with experienced tree care professionals who understand our unique Maritime growing conditions and can shape your ornamental trees for both beauty and longevity.

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Q3

## When should I remove tree stakes and wires?

**Tree stakes and wires should typically be removed after one full growing season in New Brunswick, usually 12-18 months after planting.** The goal is to remove support once the tree has developed enough root system to anchor itself, but before the stakes cause damage or prevent natural trunk strengthening.

Most trees planted in spring should have their stakes removed the following spring or early summer. However, the timing depends more on the tree's stability than a strict timeline. **Test the tree's stability** by gently pushing the trunk about 6 inches above ground level. If the root ball moves or lifts, the tree needs more time with stakes. If the trunk flexes but the roots stay firmly anchored, it's ready for stake removal.

**New Brunswick's challenging conditions** make proper timing especially important. Our strong Maritime winds, heavy snow loads, and freeze-thaw cycles put extra stress on newly planted trees. However, leaving stakes too long actually weakens trees by preventing the natural trunk movement that builds strength. The trunk needs to flex slightly in wind to develop the taper and wood density required to stand independently.

**Remove stakes during calm weather** in late spring or early summer when the tree is actively growing. Cut wires and ties carefully to avoid damaging bark, and remove stakes completely rather than cutting them at ground level. Inspect the trunk for any wire damage or girdling where ties may have cut into growing bark.

**Signs you should remove stakes immediately**, regardless of timing, include wires cutting into bark, stakes leaning or loose in the ground, or ties that have become too tight. These situations cause more harm than the support provides. Conversely, **keep stakes longer** for trees planted on windy sites, in sandy coastal soils, or top-heavy specimens like evergreens with large canopies relative to their root systems.

**When hiring a landscaper for tree planting**, discuss their staking removal service upfront. Many homeowners forget about stake removal, leading to girdled trees years later. Professional landscapers familiar with New Brunswick conditions can assess your specific site and provide guidance on optimal removal timing for your trees.

For large or valuable trees, consider having a certified arborist evaluate stake removal timing, especially if you're unsure about the tree's stability or if it's planted in challenging conditions common throughout New Brunswick.

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## What are the best shade trees for New Brunswick residential yards?

**Sugar maple and red maple are the top shade tree choices for New Brunswick residential yards**, delivering dense canopy coverage, spectacular fall colour, and proven cold-hardiness across all NB hardiness zones from 3b in the north to 5b along the coast. Sugar maples thrive throughout the Saint John River valley and Fredericton area, growing 40-80 feet tall with a broad, rounded crown that can shade an entire backyard within 15-20 years.

Red maple is an especially versatile choice for NB homeowners because it tolerates a wider range of soil conditions than sugar maple, including the clay-heavy soils common around Fredericton and the wetter areas near Moncton. It grows slightly faster — about 12 to 18 inches per year — and its brilliant red fall foliage is among the most striking in the Maritimes. For smaller residential lots where a 60-foot tree might overwhelm the space, consider the **red oak or honeylocust** as alternatives. Red oak provides excellent shade with a more upright growth habit and tolerates NB's acidic soils (pH 4.5-6.0) without complaint. Thornless honeylocust offers dappled, filtered shade that allows grass to grow underneath, making it ideal for front yards where you want shade without killing the lawn.

**White birch is another iconic New Brunswick shade tree**, particularly well-suited to zones 3b-4b in northern communities like Bathurst and Campbellton. Its distinctive white bark provides year-round visual interest, though it can be susceptible to birch leaf miner, a common pest across NB. Regular monitoring and treatment with insecticidal soap in late May can keep this pest in check. Linden (basswood) is an often-overlooked option that deserves more attention from NB homeowners — it grows steadily in zones 4-5, produces fragrant flowers that attract pollinators, and develops a dense, symmetrical canopy perfect for shading patios and decks.

When planting shade trees in New Brunswick, timing matters significantly. **The best planting window is May through mid-June or early September**, giving roots time to establish before winter. Avoid planting after October 1, as trees need at least 6-8 weeks of root growth before the ground freezes. Budget \$200 to \$800 per tree installed, depending on caliper size and species. A 2-inch caliper sugar maple typically runs \$350-500 planted, while larger 3-4 inch specimens can exceed \$700.

For the best results, plant shade trees at least 15-20 feet from your home's foundation and 10 feet from driveways and sidewalks to prevent root damage to infrastructure. Water deeply once per week during the first two growing seasons, and apply 2-3 inches of mulch in a wide ring around the base, keeping it 3-4 inches away from the trunk.

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Q5

## When is the best time to plant trees in New Brunswick?

**The best time to plant trees in New Brunswick is spring, from mid-May through mid-June, after the last frost has passed and the ground has fully thawed.** Early fall planting in September is a solid second option, but you must get trees in the ground before October 1 to give roots at least 6-8 weeks of growing time before NB's soil freezes in late November or December.

Spring planting is generally preferred in New Brunswick because it gives trees an entire growing season to establish their root systems before facing their first Maritime winter. In the Fredericton and Woodstock areas (zone 4a-4b), soil temperatures typically reach the 10°C minimum needed for root growth by mid-May. Coastal areas around Moncton and Saint John (zone 5a-5b) warm up slightly earlier, sometimes allowing planting as early as late April in mild years. Northern communities like Campbellton and Bathurst (zone 3b) should wait until late May or even early June, as frost can linger well into the season.

**Fall planting works well for deciduous trees and many conifers**, as the warm soil and cooler air temperatures reduce transplant stress. The key advantage is that NB typically receives steady rainfall in September and October, reducing the need for manual watering. However, fall planting carries more risk for broadleaf evergreens like rhododendrons, which can suffer winter desiccation if their roots have not established enough to supply moisture to their leaves through NB's harsh winters. If you must plant in fall, finish by the last week of September and water deeply until the ground freezes.

**Container-grown trees offer the most flexibility** in planting timing and are widely available at New Brunswick garden centres throughout the growing season. Balled-and-burlapped trees, common for larger specimens, are best planted in spring or early fall when nurseries dig them fresh. Bare-root trees, the most affordable option at \$50-150 per tree, must be planted during dormancy in early spring before buds break — typically the first two weeks of May in most of NB.

Regardless of when you plant, proper technique makes a huge difference in survival rates. Dig the hole two to three times wider than the root ball but no deeper — the root flare should sit at or slightly above grade level. In NB's

heavy clay soils around the Saint John River valley, amending the backfill with 25-30% compost improves drainage and encourages root expansion. Budget \$200 to \$800 per tree installed professionally, which includes the tree, planting, staking, and initial mulching. Water newly planted trees deeply once per week — about 10-15 gallons per inch of trunk diameter — throughout their first two growing seasons.

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Q6

## How do I protect young trees from frost damage during NB winters?

**Protecting young trees from frost damage in New Brunswick starts with proper fall preparation, beginning in late October before temperatures consistently drop below -5°C.** Young trees — those planted within the past 2-3 years — are especially vulnerable because their root systems have not yet grown deep enough to access moisture below the frost line, and their thin bark cannot withstand the freeze-thaw cycles common throughout NB from November through March.

The most important protection measure is **wrapping the trunk with commercial tree wrap or white spiral tree guards** from the soil line up to the first major branches. This prevents sunscald, a condition where warm winter sun heats the south-facing bark during the day, only for rapid freezing at night to crack and split the tissue. Sunscald is extremely common on young maples, birch, and fruit trees throughout the Fredericton and Moncton areas. Apply tree wrap in late October and remove it in early April — leaving it on through summer traps moisture and encourages disease.

**Mulching is your second line of defence.** Apply 3-4 inches of shredded cedar or hardwood mulch in a wide circle extending 2-3 feet from the trunk, but keep it 3-4 inches away from the bark itself to prevent rot and discourage mice from nesting against the trunk. This insulating layer moderates soil temperature swings and helps prevent

frost heaving, where freeze-thaw cycles literally push shallow-rooted young trees out of the ground. In NB's zone 3b areas like Campbellton and Bathurst, consider adding an extra inch of mulch beyond what southern NB properties need.

**Burlap screening protects vulnerable evergreens and broadleaf shrubs** from desiccating winter winds and road salt spray. Drive stakes around the tree and staple burlap to them, creating a wind barrier without wrapping the burlap directly against the foliage. This is particularly important for trees planted near roads in NB cities where salt trucks pass regularly, as salt spray can cause severe browning and dieback on cedars, spruce, and hemlock.

Watering deeply in late fall — right up until the ground freezes in November — is often overlooked but critically important. Trees that enter winter with dry root zones suffer far more frost damage than well-hydrated ones. Give each young tree a thorough soaking of 15-20 gallons weekly throughout October and into November. For fruit trees and thin-barked species like cherry and apple, consider installing a hardware cloth cylinder around the base to prevent rabbit and vole damage, which is widespread across rural New Brunswick properties. These rodents chew bark under snow cover, girdling and killing young trees by spring.

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## What flowering shrubs bloom reliably in New Brunswick's climate?

**Lilacs, panicle hydrangeas, and forsythia are the most reliable flowering shrubs for New Brunswick gardens**, blooming vigorously and consistently even after the province's harshest winters. These three species are cold-hardy to zone 3, meaning they thrive from the Campbellton area all the way down to the milder coastal communities around Saint John and Moncton.

The **common lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*)** is arguably New Brunswick's most beloved flowering shrub, producing masses of fragrant purple, pink, or white blooms in late May to early June. Lilacs are extraordinarily cold-hardy, disease-resistant, and long-lived — many NB properties have lilac hedges that are 50+ years old and still blooming prolifically. They prefer full sun and slightly alkaline soil, so adding dolomitic lime to NB's naturally acidic soil (pH 4.5-6.0) significantly improves blooming. Plant them where they receive at least 6 hours of direct sunlight and prune immediately after flowering to avoid cutting off next year's buds.

**Panicle hydrangeas (*Hydrangea paniculata*) are the only hydrangea type truly reliable across all of New Brunswick.** Varieties like 'Limelight,' 'Little Lime,' and 'Bobo' bloom on new wood, meaning even if winter kills the stems back, they regrow and flower that same summer. This is a critical distinction in NB — the popular blue and pink mophead hydrangeas (*H. macrophylla*) bloom on old wood and rarely flower in zones colder than 5b because their flower buds freeze over winter. Panicle hydrangeas produce large cone-shaped white to pink blooms from July through September and tolerate NB's acidic soils without issue.

**Forsythia lights up New Brunswick landscapes in late April to early May** with brilliant yellow flowers that appear before leaves emerge. Choose the 'Northern Gold' or 'Meadowlark' cultivars, which are specifically bred for cold hardiness and bloom reliably in zones 3-4, unlike older varieties that often have their flower buds killed by NB winter temperatures. Spirea is another excellent choice, with varieties like 'Goldflame' and 'Little Princess' producing pink flower clusters from June through August while requiring almost zero maintenance.

**Potentilla (shrubby cinquefoil) deserves special mention for NB gardens** because it blooms continuously from June through September, tolerates poor and acidic soil, and is hardy to zone 2. Its small yellow, white, or pink flowers are not as showy as lilac or hydrangea, but no other shrub provides such a long bloom season in the Maritimes. For zone 5 gardens in the Moncton and Saint John areas, rose of Sharon adds late-summer tropical-looking flowers, though it needs a sheltered spot and may die back in severe winters. Most flowering shrubs run \$25 to \$60 each at NB garden centres, and a professional planting typically costs \$50-100 per shrub including soil amendment.

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Q8

## When and how should I prune lilac bushes in New Brunswick?

**Prune lilac bushes in New Brunswick immediately after they finish blooming, typically in mid to late June.**

This timing is critical because lilacs set next year's flower buds on old wood during late summer, so pruning any later than early July risks cutting off the buds that would produce next spring's blooms. This is the single most common mistake NB homeowners make with lilacs — pruning in fall or early spring and then wondering why their bushes produce only leaves the following year.

For annual maintenance pruning, focus on three tasks. First, **remove all spent flower clusters** by cutting back to the first set of leaves or side shoots below the bloom. This prevents the plant from wasting energy on seed production and redirects it toward forming next year's flower buds. Second, cut out any dead, crossing, or rubbing branches to improve air circulation through the interior of the shrub — this helps prevent powdery mildew, a fungal disease that is extremely common on NB lilacs during humid Maritime summers. Third, remove a few of the oldest, thickest stems at ground level each year, taking out no more than one-third of the total canes, to encourage vigorous new growth from the base.

**For overgrown lilacs that have become leggy or stopped blooming well**, a more aggressive renewal pruning is needed. The best approach in New Brunswick is the three-year renewal method: each June, cut one-third of the oldest, thickest trunks down to 6-12 inches above the ground. Over three years, you completely replace the old wood with vigorous new shoots without ever losing the entire plant. The new shoots will begin blooming in their second or third year. If the bush is truly hopeless — a tangled mass of thin stems with blooms only at the very top — you can do a hard rejuvenation prune by cutting the entire shrub to 12 inches in late winter (March). You will sacrifice 2-3 years of blooms, but the bush will regrow into a shapely, floriferous specimen.

**After pruning, apply a topdressing of compost and a handful of dolomitic lime** around the base of each lilac. NB's naturally acidic soil (pH 4.5-6.0) is below the 6.5-7.0 range that lilacs prefer, and annual liming significantly improves bloom production. A soil test (\$30-60 at NB labs) will tell you exactly how much lime to apply, but a general guideline is 2-3 cups of dolomitic lime per mature bush worked into the top few inches of soil.

Never shear lilacs with hedge trimmers, as this removes flower buds across the entire surface and produces an unnatural shape. Always use bypass hand pruners for smaller branches and a pruning saw for old trunks. If your lilacs have become too large to manage safely, professional pruning runs \$150-400 per large specimen in New Brunswick.

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Q9

## How do I identify and treat common tree diseases in New Brunswick?

**The most common tree diseases in New Brunswick include Dutch elm disease, apple scab, fire blight, tar spot on maples, cytospora canker on spruce, and birch leaf miner infestations.** Identifying these problems early and acting quickly is essential to saving affected trees and preventing spread to healthy specimens on your property.

**Dutch elm disease (DED)** remains the most devastating tree disease in New Brunswick, transmitted by bark beetles. Symptoms include wilting and yellowing leaves on individual branches, usually starting in the upper crown during June and July, followed by rapid browning and branch death. If you peel back the bark on an affected branch, you will see brown streaking in the sapwood. There is no cure — infected elms must be removed promptly to prevent beetle spread to neighbouring trees. Report suspected DED to your municipality, as many NB communities have elm management programs.

**Apple scab** is extremely common on both ornamental and fruiting apple trees across New Brunswick, appearing as olive-green to black velvety spots on leaves and fruit starting in late May. In humid Maritime summers, heavily infected trees may drop most of their leaves by August. Prevention is the best strategy: rake and remove fallen leaves in autumn to reduce overwintering spores, and apply fungicide sprays (lime-sulfur or copper-based) at bud break in spring. Choosing scab-resistant apple varieties like 'Liberty' or 'Enterprise' eliminates this problem entirely for new plantings.

**Fire blight** affects apple, pear, and related species, causing branch tips to wilt and turn black as if scorched by fire, forming a characteristic shepherd's crook shape. It spreads rapidly in warm, wet spring weather. Prune infected branches at least 12 inches below visible damage, sterilizing your pruners with rubbing alcohol between every cut.

**Tar spot on maples** appears as raised black spots on leaves in late summer and is purely cosmetic — it looks alarming but does not harm the tree. Raking and disposing of infected leaves in fall reduces next year's severity.

**Cytospora canker** attacks stressed spruce trees, particularly Colorado blue spruce, causing lower branches to die progressively. Look for white resin bleeding from bark on affected branches. There is no chemical treatment — prune affected branches in dry weather and improve tree health through proper watering and mulching. **Spruce budworm** is a cyclical pest across northern New Brunswick that can defoliate balsam fir and spruce over successive years. Watch for small caterpillars feeding on new growth in May and June.

For any serious tree disease, consult a certified arborist who can provide an accurate diagnosis and treatment plan. Professional tree health assessments in New Brunswick typically cost \$100-200, and early intervention can save a tree worth thousands of dollars in property value.

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## What are the best evergreen trees for a privacy screen in NB?

**Eastern white cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*) is the top choice for evergreen privacy screens in New Brunswick**, offering year-round dense foliage, excellent cold hardiness to zone 3, and a naturally columnar growth habit that requires minimal pruning. Cedar screens are ubiquitous across the province for good reason — they grow well in NB's acidic soils, tolerate moderate shade, and can be planted as close as 3-4 feet apart to create a solid visual barrier within 4-5 years.

For a standard residential privacy screen in the Fredericton or Moncton area, plant **6 to 8-foot tall cedar transplants spaced 3 to 4 feet apart on centre**. At this spacing, the trees will grow together into a continuous hedge within 3-5 growing seasons. Expect to pay \$80-200 per tree at this size from NB nurseries, or \$40-80 for smaller 3-4 foot specimens that will take longer to fill in. Cedar grows approximately 6-12 inches per year in New Brunswick, eventually reaching 20-40 feet if left unpruned, though most homeowners maintain their screens at 8-15 feet with annual trimming in late June.

**White spruce is an excellent alternative for exposed or windy sites** where cedar might struggle. Spruce grows faster than cedar — up to 18 inches annually — and its stiffer branches handle NB's heavy snow and ice loads better. However, spruce trees are wider at the base, requiring 8-10 foot spacing, and they do not respond as well to tight hedge-style pruning. They work best as a naturalistic screen rather than a formal hedge. For coastal properties in Saint John or Shediac, white spruce also provides superior salt tolerance compared to cedar.

**Colorado blue spruce** offers a striking blue-silver colour and grows reliably in NB zones 4-5, though it is susceptible to cytospora canker and needle cast diseases in humid Maritime conditions. Use it as an accent within a mixed screen rather than the primary species. **Eastern hemlock** creates a beautiful, soft-textured privacy screen and tolerates shade better than any other NB evergreen, making it ideal for north-facing property lines. However, hemlock grows slowly (6-10 inches per year) and is sensitive to winter wind exposure, so it performs best in sheltered locations in southern NB.

When planning your privacy screen, **consider mature width as carefully as height**. Cedar needs 3-4 feet of clearance from property lines and fences to maintain healthy growth on all sides. In NB municipalities, check local bylaws regarding hedge heights and setbacks before planting — Fredericton, Moncton, and Saint John all have specific regulations. A professionally installed cedar privacy screen of 20-30 trees typically costs \$2,500 to \$6,000 in New Brunswick, including trees, soil amendment, mulch, and planting labour.

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Q11

## How much does professional tree pruning cost in New Brunswick?

**Professional tree pruning in New Brunswick typically costs \$200 to \$800 per tree**, depending on the tree's size, species, condition, and accessibility. Small ornamental trees under 20 feet tall generally fall in the \$200-350 range, while large shade trees like mature maples and oaks over 40 feet can run \$500-800 or more. Emergency storm damage pruning and trees near power lines will be at the higher end due to the additional risk and equipment required.

Several factors influence the final price from NB arborists. **Tree height is the primary cost driver** — a 15-foot ornamental crabapple requires only hand tools and a small ladder, while a 60-foot sugar maple demands bucket trucks, climbing gear, and significantly more time. The condition of the tree also matters: a healthy tree needing routine crown thinning is straightforward, but a storm-damaged tree with broken limbs hanging overhead is classified as hazardous work and priced accordingly. Most NB tree services quote per tree rather than per hour, though hourly rates typically range from \$75 to \$150 for a certified arborist and crew.

**The type of pruning you need also affects cost.** Crown cleaning (removing dead and diseased branches) is the most basic service and the most affordable. Crown thinning (selectively removing interior branches to improve light and air circulation) takes more skill and time. Crown raising (removing lower branches for clearance) is common for trees overhanging sidewalks and driveways. Crown reduction (reducing the overall size of the canopy) is the most labour-intensive and expensive, as each cut must be made at a proper branch junction to avoid damaging the tree.

In New Brunswick, **the best time to schedule pruning is late winter (February-March) or midsummer (July-August)** when most arborists have lighter schedules and trees respond well to cuts. Avoid pruning maples, birch, and elm in spring when sap is running heavily — sap bleeding does not harm the tree but creates an unsightly mess and can attract insects. Elm trees specifically should only be pruned during the dormant season (November-March) to reduce the risk of Dutch elm disease transmission by bark beetles.

**When hiring a tree service in NB, always verify they carry proper insurance** — a minimum of \$2 million general liability and workers' compensation coverage through WorkSafeNB. Ask for proof before any work begins. A falling branch can cause tens of thousands of dollars in damage to your home, vehicle, or neighbouring property, and an uninsured company leaves you liable. Look for ISA (International Society of Arboriculture) certified arborists, and get at least two written quotes. Stump grinding, if needed after removal of dead branches, adds \$150-400 depending on stump diameter and accessibility.

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Q12

## When should I remove a dead or dying tree on my NB property?

**A dead or dying tree should be removed as soon as possible if it is within striking distance of your home, driveway, walkway, power lines, or areas where people spend time.** Dead trees become increasingly unpredictable with each passing season in New Brunswick, where heavy snow loads, ice storms, and high winds can bring them down with little warning. A dead tree that might stand for a year in calm conditions can snap overnight during a Nor'easter or January ice storm.

Several signs indicate a tree is dead or in irreversible decline. **No leaf production in spring** is the clearest signal — scratch a small area of bark on a twig and look for green tissue underneath. If the wood is dry and brown throughout, that branch is dead. Extensive **fungal growth on the trunk**, particularly shelf fungi (conks) emerging from the bark, indicates advanced internal decay. Large sections of **bark falling off**, revealing bare wood, mean the cambium layer has died. Significant **lean that has developed recently** — as opposed to a tree that has always grown at an angle — suggests root failure and imminent toppling.

**In New Brunswick, ice storms are a particular hazard** that turns dead trees into projectile launchers. Dead branches are brittle and cannot flex under ice weight the way living wood does. A single dead tree in your yard can damage your roof, crush a vehicle, or take down power lines during an ice event, potentially costing thousands in repairs and leaving your family without heat in the middle of a Maritime winter. Your homeowner's insurance may deny claims if the insurer determines you neglected a clearly dead tree that was a known hazard.

**Professional tree removal in New Brunswick costs \$500 to \$3,000 or more**, depending primarily on size, location, and complexity. A straightforward removal of a 30-foot dead tree in an open yard might cost \$500-800, while a large dead maple overhanging a house can exceed \$2,000-3,000 due to the rigging and precision required to lower sections safely. Stump grinding adds \$150-400 to the total. Many NB municipalities, including Fredericton and Moncton, require permits for tree removal, even on private property, so check with your local bylaw office before scheduling the work.

The best time to remove a dead tree is during winter when the ground is frozen, providing better access for heavy equipment, and surrounding gardens are dormant, minimizing collateral damage. However, if the tree poses an immediate safety risk, do not wait — call a certified arborist for an emergency assessment. Always verify that your tree removal company carries WorkSafeNB coverage and at least \$2 million in liability insurance before any chainsaw starts.

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## What hedge species survive the harshest New Brunswick winters?

**Eastern white cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*), alpine currant, and ninebark are the three toughest hedge species for New Brunswick's harshest winters**, all reliably cold-hardy to zone 3 and capable of withstanding the -35°C to -40°C temperatures that occasionally hit inland and northern NB communities like Campbellton, Bathurst, and Woodstock.

Eastern white cedar remains the province's most popular hedge plant, and for good reason. It is **native to New Brunswick, dense enough to provide complete privacy**, and tolerates the acidic soils (pH 4.5-6.0) found across the province without amendment. For cold-exposed sites, choose the 'Brandon' or 'Holmstrup' cultivars, which are specifically selected for extreme winter hardiness and maintain a tight, compact form even in zone 3b. Cedar hedges should be trimmed once per year in late June, shaping them slightly wider at the base than the top so that lower branches receive adequate sunlight and snow slides off the tapered sides rather than accumulating and splaying branches apart.

**Alpine currant (*Ribes alpinum*) is the most underrated hedge plant in New Brunswick.** This deciduous shrub is hardy to zone 2, meaning it laughs at anything NB winters can deliver. It forms a dense, rounded hedge 3-5 feet tall, responds beautifully to shearing, and tolerates both full sun and partial shade. Its small, glossy leaves emerge early in spring and hold late into fall. The only downside is that it drops its leaves in winter, so it does not provide year-round screening. For properties in northern NB where even cedar can struggle in exposed locations, alpine currant is the safest bet.

**Ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*)** has gained enormous popularity in NB landscaping in recent years, and varieties like 'Diablo' (deep purple foliage) and 'Dart's Gold' (bright yellow leaves) add dramatic colour to a hedge while being hardy to zone 3. Ninebark grows 5-8 feet tall if left unpruned and tolerates a wide range of soil types. It produces clusters of small white flowers in June and peeling bark that adds winter texture. For a more formal, lower hedge, **potentilla** stays 2-4 feet tall, blooms from June through September, and is hardy to zone 2.

**Privet is a traditional hedge choice that works well in NB's zone 4-5 areas** but may suffer dieback in zone 3b. Choose Amur privet for maximum cold hardiness. Boxwood, while popular in southern gardens, is marginal in most of New Brunswick — only attempt it in sheltered zone 5 locations in the Moncton or Saint John areas. For hedge installation, budget \$15-50 per plant depending on species and size, with professional planting adding \$10-20 per shrub. A 50-foot cedar hedge of 15-17 plants typically costs \$1,500-3,000 installed in New Brunswick.

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Q14

## How do I prevent ice storm damage to trees in New Brunswick?

**The best way to prevent ice storm damage to trees in New Brunswick is proactive structural pruning during the dormant season, combined with selecting ice-resistant species for new plantings.** NB experiences significant ice storms every 3-5 years on average, and the 2017 event demonstrated how quickly ice loading can devastate poorly maintained trees across the province, snapping branches and toppling entire specimens from Fredericton to Moncton.

**Regular crown thinning is your most effective preventive measure.** A certified arborist can selectively remove interior branches to reduce wind resistance and allow ice-laden air to pass through the canopy rather than loading up on a dense mass of branches. Thinning reduces the surface area available for ice accumulation by 20-30% while maintaining the tree's natural shape and health. Schedule this work for late winter (February-March) when arborists can clearly see the branch structure without foliage obscuring their view. Budget \$200-800 per tree depending on size.

**Certain tree species are far more vulnerable to ice damage than others.** Silver maple, willow, and poplar have weak, brittle wood that splits easily under ice weight — avoid planting these as shade trees near your home. Birch trees, while beautiful, have flexible trunks that can bend to the ground under heavy ice, sometimes permanently. The most ice-resistant species for NB include red oak, sugar maple, white spruce, and honeylocust, all of which have strong wood and branch structures that shed ice more effectively.

**Proper pruning technique matters as much as frequency.** Remove branches with narrow crotch angles (V-shaped unions), which are inherently weak and prone to splitting. Eliminate crossing branches that rub against each other, creating wounds that weaken the wood. Never top a tree — topping produces dense clusters of weak, rapidly growing sprouts that are far more susceptible to ice breakage than natural branch structure. Co-dominant leaders (two main trunks of equal size) should be addressed while the tree is young by removing one or installing a cable

system to prevent splitting.

**For young trees, consider installing guy wires or staking** during their first 1-2 winters to prevent ice-related leaning or uprooting. Wrap vulnerable multi-stem shrubs like arborvitae and upright junipers with soft twine or burlap strips in late November to hold branches together during ice events. Remove the wrapping in early April.

After an ice storm, resist the urge to shake ice off branches — this causes more breakage than allowing it to melt naturally. If you have storm-damaged trees, have a certified arborist assess them before attempting repairs. Improperly pruned storm damage often leads to decay, disease entry, and future structural weakness that makes the tree even more dangerous in the next ice event.

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**Q15**

## When should I fertilize trees and shrubs in New Brunswick?

**The best time to fertilize trees and shrubs in New Brunswick is early spring, from late April through mid-May, just as buds begin to swell and root growth accelerates in the warming soil.** A second, lighter application can be made in early June for trees and shrubs that show signs of nutrient deficiency, but avoid fertilizing after mid-July — late-season fertilizing promotes soft new growth that will not harden off before NB's early frosts arrive in September and October, leading to winter dieback.

Before applying any fertilizer, **get a soil test to understand what your soil actually needs.** New Brunswick soils are typically acidic (pH 4.5-6.0) and often deficient in calcium and magnesium. A basic soil test costs \$30-60 through the NB Department of Agriculture or private labs and tells you the exact pH, nutrient levels, and organic matter content of your soil. Many NB homeowners waste money on high-nitrogen fertilizer when their trees actually need lime to raise pH, which unlocks nutrients already present in the soil. Dolomitic lime is particularly valuable for

NB properties because it raises pH while also supplying magnesium, which is commonly deficient in Maritime soils.

**For most established trees and shrubs in good health, a balanced slow-release granular fertilizer (such as 10-10-10 or 14-14-14) applied at a rate of 1-2 pounds per inch of trunk diameter works well.** Spread it evenly beneath the canopy drip line — not piled against the trunk — and water it in thoroughly. Newly planted trees should not be fertilized in their first year, as the stress of transplanting combined with fertilizer salts can burn tender new roots. Wait until the second spring, then apply a gentle, slow-release formula at half the normal rate.

**Flowering shrubs like lilacs and hydrangeas benefit from different approaches.** Lilacs prefer a low-nitrogen fertilizer or simply a top-dressing of compost and bone meal in early May, which promotes flower production over leafy growth. Panicle hydrangeas respond well to a balanced fertilizer applied when new growth emerges in spring. Acid-loving shrubs like rhododendrons and azaleas (marginal in NB but possible in zone 5 sheltered spots) need an acidifying fertilizer formulated for evergreens.

**Evergreen trees and hedges should be fertilized in early May** as new growth begins, using a fertilizer formulated for evergreens (higher nitrogen, often with added iron and sulfur). Cedar hedges in particular respond dramatically to proper fertilization, producing denser, greener foliage. Apply granular fertilizer along both sides of the hedge row and water deeply. For established trees that appear healthy and are growing normally, annual fertilization is not always necessary — a 2-3 inch layer of quality compost spread under the canopy each spring provides gentle, sustained nutrition.

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## What fruit trees grow well in New Brunswick zones 4 and 5?

**Apple trees are the most successful and widely grown fruit trees in New Brunswick, with cold-hardy varieties like McIntosh, Cortland, and Honeycrisp thriving across zones 4 and 5.** The province has a long history of apple production, particularly in the Saint John River valley around Fredericton and the Annapolis-adjacent areas of southwestern NB, where the microclimate provides excellent growing conditions for tree fruit.

**For zone 4 reliability (Fredericton, Woodstock, Grand Falls areas), focus on the hardiest apple varieties.**

McIntosh is the gold standard — it was developed for Maritime/Canadian conditions and produces reliably heavy crops of flavourful fruit ripening in September. Cortland is equally hardy and resists browning after cutting, making it excellent for fresh eating and cooking. Honeycrisp is slightly less cold-hardy but performs well in sheltered zone 4b locations and produces arguably the best eating apple in North America. Other proven zone 4 varieties include Spartan, Liberty (scab-resistant), and Wealthy. Plant at least two different apple varieties for cross-pollination, spacing standard trees 20-25 feet apart or semi-dwarf trees 12-15 feet apart.

**Pear trees are the second most successful fruit tree for NB,** though variety selection is more limited. Flemish Beauty is the hardiest pear available, reliable to zone 3, and produces sweet, juicy fruit in September. Clapp's Favourite and Bartlett work well in zone 5 locations around Moncton and Saint John. Like apples, pears require cross-pollination between two compatible varieties. Pear trees are actually easier to grow than apples in NB because they have fewer pest and disease problems, though fire blight can be an issue in warm, humid springs.

**Sour cherry trees are excellent for zone 4-5 NB gardens,** and the self-fertile varieties like Montmorency and Evans do not need a second tree for pollination. Sour cherries are outstanding for pies, preserves, and juice. Sweet cherries, unfortunately, are marginal even in zone 5 NB — they require longer, warmer summers than the Maritime climate typically provides. **Plum trees,** both European (Damson, Mount Royal) and Japanese-American hybrids (Toka, Superior), grow well in zone 5 and sheltered zone 4b locations.

When planting fruit trees in New Brunswick, **choose a site with full sun (minimum 6-8 hours daily), good air circulation, and well-drained soil.** The clay-heavy soils around Fredericton may need amendment with compost to improve drainage. Plant in spring (mid-May to mid-June) and budget \$200-400 per tree installed, including staking and initial mulching. Fruit trees require annual pruning, pest management, and a commitment to picking up fallen fruit to reduce disease — they are more work than ornamental trees but the reward of homegrown Maritime fruit is well worth the effort.

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Q17

## How do I care for newly planted trees during their first NB winter?

**Caring for newly planted trees through their first New Brunswick winter begins in early fall, not when the snow arrives, and focuses on building root moisture reserves, insulating the root zone, and protecting thin bark from freeze-thaw damage.** Trees planted in their first year are at the highest risk of winter mortality because their root systems have not yet grown beyond the original planting hole, leaving them vulnerable to dehydration, frost heaving, and temperature extremes.

**Deep watering throughout October and into November is the single most important thing you can do.**

Continue giving each newly planted tree 10-15 gallons of water per week until the ground freezes solid, typically mid to late November in the Fredericton area and slightly later near the coast. Trees that enter winter with adequate moisture in their root zone are dramatically more likely to survive than drought-stressed ones. NB's autumn rainfall often seems sufficient, but in dry fall seasons — which are increasingly common — supplemental watering makes the difference between a thriving tree in spring and a dead one.

**Apply 3-4 inches of shredded mulch in a wide ring** extending 2-3 feet from the trunk in all directions, but keep mulch 3-4 inches away from the bark itself. This insulating layer moderates soil temperature fluctuations and reduces frost heaving — the repeated freeze-thaw cycles that literally push shallow-rooted young trees out of the ground. In NB's zone 3b areas like Campbellton, consider 4-5 inches of mulch for added protection. Use cedar or hardwood mulch at \$40-70 per cubic yard from local suppliers.

**Wrap the trunk from soil level to the first branch** using commercial tree wrap or white plastic spiral guards, applied in late October. This prevents sunscald, a devastating condition where the winter sun warms bark on the south side during the day, activating cells that then rupture when temperatures plummet at night. Sunscald creates long, vertical cracks that invite disease and insects. Remove tree wrap in early April to prevent moisture trapping during the growing season. Young maple, birch, cherry, and apple trees are especially susceptible.

**If your tree was staked at planting, check that stakes and ties are secure** but not too tight — ties should allow slight trunk movement, which encourages the tree to develop its own structural strength. Replace any ties that are cutting into bark. For evergreen trees, install a burlap wind screen on the windward side if the planting site is exposed, particularly along NB's coastal areas where winter winds carry desiccating salt spray. Drive stakes 12 inches outside the root zone and staple burlap to them, leaving the top open for air circulation.

In spring, remove all winter protection by mid-April, inspect the trunk for rodent damage or bark splitting, and resume watering once the ground thaws. A tree that survives its first NB winter in good shape is well on its way to a long, healthy life on your property.

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