

FBMG Help Desk  
**Question of the Week**

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I have mistletoe in my tree. Should I be concerned?

*Lets take a look..*



# What Is Mistletoe?

## *Identifying the Presence of Mistletoe*



The presence of mistletoe is fairly easy to see in some deciduous trees this time of year.

*Considered a broadleaf evergreen, mistletoe is identified by the presence of its green stems, white berries and thick oval leaves that develop into clusters which can grow up to 2 feet in diameter if left unchecked.*

*Typically present in the upper and outward branches of tall trees, it is also possible to appear in certain larger shrubs*



*While several hardwood species are susceptible to mistletoe, in this area Oak trees and other hardwoods are the typical 'hosts' to mistletoe.*

# How It Grows and Spreads

## Understanding Mistletoe

*Mistletoe can produce its own photosynthesis but has to rely on the host plant for water and minerals*



*Mistletoe is considered a semi-parasitic plant - a 'hemiparasite'*

- *Mistletoe has both male and female plants*
- *The plant spreads through seeds that are covered with viscin (a glue-like substance that allows the seed to adhere to a new host).*
- *The seeds are spread by birds and other animals that allow the sticky seeds to hitchhike or are ingested and released in feces on a new host.*
- *Certain species of mistletoe can 'eject' their own seeds at speeds of up to 60 mph - like an exploding water balloon.*

*Mistletoe generally needs to be several years old to produce berries and reproduce*

# Animals, Birds and Insects Benefit

## *Shelter and Food*

Used by Many!!!



- 3 types of hairstreak butterflies are found feeding, reproducing & thriving on mistletoe
- wrens, mourning doves & other birds, as well as squirrels make use of mistletoe for nesting
- while the berries are toxic to humans they are not to many other mammals and birds, which are frequently found eating them



## Often Used as Decor

*The presence of mistletoe is a possible sign of other issues.*

Mistletoe grows most frequently on trees that are stressed or weakened by other factors. Stress and weakness can be the result of several factors, some of which are soil compaction, poor drainage or root loss/damage.

Initial growth is slow, so if you notice mistletoe is present there is ample time to address it.



- *The best defense for your tree is to help your tree remain healthy.*
- *The best way to remove it is through pruning, however over pruning can injure your tree.*
- *Spraying herbicide on mistletoe will most likely damage your tree.*

*Practice safety, when in doubt contact a professional to prune.*

*Do you have questions  
about your home  
landscape and plants?*

*Contact the Fort Bend  
Master Gardener Help Desk*

*Email:  
FortBendmg@ag.tamu.edu*

*Phone:  
281-341-7068*

*The Help Desk is manned  
Monday thru Friday,  
9am-Noon*

[https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/mistletoe\\_scienc\\_e\\_and\\_folklore](https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/mistletoe_scienc_e_and_folklore)

<https://depts.washington.edu/hortlib/pal/mistletoe-plant-and-its-name/>

<https://ipm>

[.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7437.html](https://www.canr.msu.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7437.html)

<https://www.uvm.edu/news/extension/whats-romance-mistletoe>

[https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/uploadedFiles/TFS\\_Main/Urban\\_and\\_Community\\_Forestry/About\\_Urban\\_and\\_Community\\_Forestry/Urban\\_Forest\\_Information\\_Sheets/Tree%20Health%20-%20Diseases\\_Mistletoe.pdf](https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/uploadedFiles/TFS_Main/Urban_and_Community_Forestry/About_Urban_and_Community_Forestry/Urban_Forest_Information_Sheets/Tree%20Health%20-%20Diseases_Mistletoe.pdf)

[How to Grow and Care for Mistletoe  
\(thespruce.com\).](https://www.pruittkennedy.com/How-to-Grow-and-Care-for-Mistletoe-(thespruce.com).)

<https://cales.arizona.edu/yavapai/anr/hort/byg/archive/mistletoeandfolklore2016.html>

[Mistletoe | Texas Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab  
\(tamu.edu\).](https://www.tamu.edu/plantdisease/diagnostic-lab/mistletoe)

[http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7437.html](https://www.ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7437.html)

[Meet You Under the Mistletoe - Williamson  
\(agrilife.org\).](https://www.agrilife.org/Meet-You-Under-the-Mistletoe-Williamson)

[UGA Extension – Madison County.](https://www.uga.edu/urbanag/Managing-Mistletoe-in-Trees-Madison-County)

[Managing Mistletoe in Trees – Center for Urban  
Agriculture \(ugaurbanag.com\).](https://www.uga.edu/urbanag/Managing-Mistletoe-in-Trees-Center-for-Urban-Agriculture)

[Mistletoe | Home & Garden Information Center  
\(clemson.edu\).](https://www.clemson.edu/home-garden/mistletoe)

[Controlling Mistletoe in Trees - Alabama Cooperative  
Extension System \(aces.edu\).](https://www.aces.edu/Controlling-Mistletoe-in-Trees-Alabama-Cooperative-Extension-System)

[Manage Forests and Land | MISTLETOE TFS  
\(tamu.edu\) FOREST HEALTH: MISTLETOE](https://www.tamu.edu/forest-health/mistletoe)

