

PRUNE YOUR TREES THE RIGHT WAY!

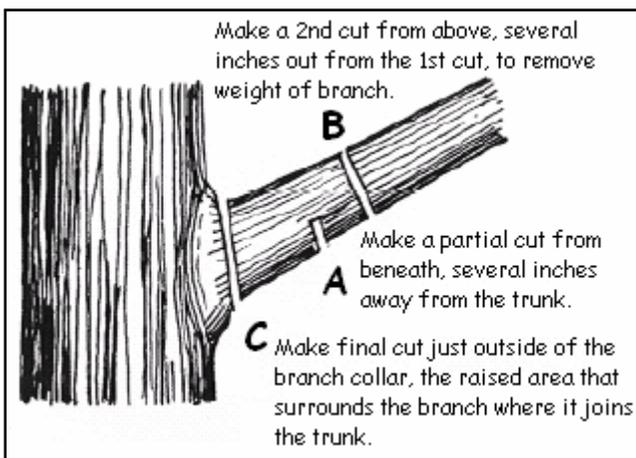
Pruning trees is part science and part art. Pruning correctly is essential for the long term health of your tree. Unfortunately, many trees suffer the abuses of topping or flush cuts, both of which may lead to rapid decay in the tree and hasten its demise.

There are many good reasons to prune trees. Removing dead wood and branches growing back into the crown of the tree or rubbing on other branches will increase the health of the tree. Thinning allows drying winds to blow through the canopy, preventing leaf diseases caused by high humidity. And, of course, pruning can eliminate branches interfering with buildings, vehicles, utilities, street signs, and other structures.



HOW TO PRUNE

To understand correct pruning, it helps to know a little about how a tree protects itself. Where two branches or a branch and trunk meet, is an area called the branch collar. A tree's main defense system is located there. The ideal pruning cut leaves the branch collar intact while removing the rest of the branch. A tree will immediately begin to wall off, or compartmentalize this area to prevent the introduction of insects or disease into the tree.



Start by making a cut on the bottom side of the branch to be pruned (A). This cut prevents the weight of the branch being removed from peeling the bark down the outer branch or trunk of the tree when the (B) cut is made. Removing the weight of the branch makes the final, critical cut easier. The final cut is right at the edge of the collar, which is a natural swelling of the branch where it joins another (C).

Pruning should always be done at branch junctions. Leaving a stub is like leaving a candy stick for decay organisms. The decay will start in the stub and move into the tree because the stub is simply too much for the tree to wall off.

Flush cuts remove the branch collar and the zone of defense in the tree. The tree is unable to form the necessary barriers to prevent entry of harmful insects and diseases. Flush cuts also promote rapid growth of callus tissue. When the callus grows together over the wound it will often in-curl, leaving internal cracks that may fail later.

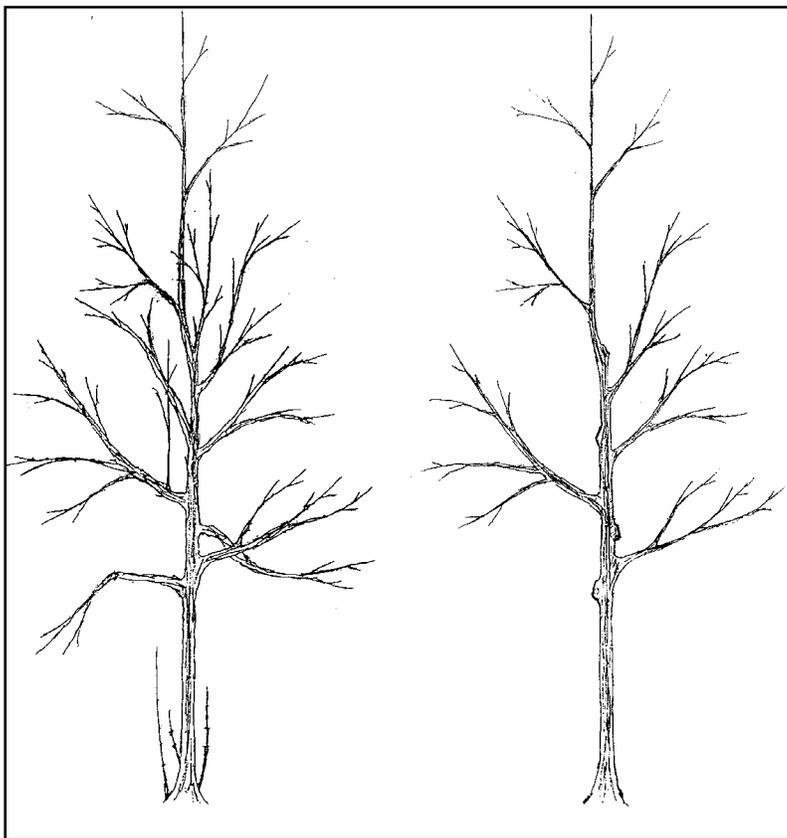
Pruning paint or wound dressing is unnecessary, except in very limited circumstances. A correctly pruned tree will form its own protective barriers, as mentioned above. Covering the wound with a paint or dressing can actually hamper the trees own natural defense system, causing problems instead of preventing them.



Be careful to avoid taking too much of the crown out of the tree. As a general rule, no more than one quarter to one third of the crown should be removed within a year.

WHEN TO PRUNE

The **WORST** time to prune is when the tree is putting out new leaves in the spring. The tree is using much of its energy producing leaves and is at its lowest energy level of the year. Pruning at this time will cause the tree to expend even more energy to wall off all the new wounds, further stressing the tree.



Autumn, when the trees are shedding their leaves is another time to avoid pruning. Pruning then will promote sucker growth and can lead to increased decay in the tree.

THE BEST TIME to prune trees is in the winter when they are dormant. The tree has a lot of stored energy at this time of the year. Pruning at this time will cause the least stress and damage to the tree.

Another good time to prune is in the summer after leaves are fully formed. Energy is being supplied to the tree through photosynthesis. Pruning at this time is good for limiting growth and reduced sprouting.

Proper pruning can be very beneficial to a tree. To ensure the best job possible, hire an expert. A qualified arborist will know the correct way to prune trees. They will not top trees or make flush cuts, even if the customer insists on it.

For more information on how to properly prune trees contact the Forestry Division or check out the links on our website.

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