



PRUNING A TREE

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PRUNE TREES CORRECTLY

Trees pruned incorrectly can develop cavities of decay that can lead to death of the tree. Pay attention to the tree and prune early to develop good structure.

Photo from Alabama A&M & Auburn Universities Extension

WHY PRUNE TREES

Trees can be pruned to improve the overall appearance, to achieve successful growth, and limit damage as the tree grows. It is best to assess the tree early in life and prune it to help develop good structural integrity within the tree by removing hazardous branches or those that are damaged by insects and diseases. Proper pruning cuts are imperative to ensure that the wound seals. Trees don't heal, they seal wounds to stop the spread of decay fungi throughout the tree.

WHEN TO PRUNE

- Deciduous Trees:
 - The ideal time to prune is in the spring to help facilitate wound closure.
 - Dead/damaged branches should be mitigated as soon as noticed to prevent future damage and reduce risk.
 - Avoid pruning oaks & elms from April - July to avoid death from oak wilt & Dutch elm disease.
- Evergreen Trees:
 - Juniper & arborvitae from mid-April through mid-August
 - Pine after candles elongate, before needles fully expand
 - Spruce, fir & hemlock when buds are dormant in late winter

Good Pruning Cut



Improper Pruning Cut

Photos from Nicole Stoner, Nebraska Extension Educator



Co-dominant Branch Habit

WHAT TO PRUNE

- **Cleaning**
 - Remove dead, dying, diseased, crossing, crowded, & low vigor branches.
- **Thinning**
 - Selectively remove branches for more light and air penetration throughout the crown of the tree.
- **Raising**
 - Remove lower branches for ground clearance.
- **Remove Co-dominant branches**
 - Co-dominant branches are branches approaching the same size as the main trunk.
 - They develop weak branch attachments & break easily in storms.
- **NO TOPPING!**
 - Topping a tree leads to rapid production of poorly attached suckers that break easily in storms and looks displeasing.
 - Stubs left behind lead to wood decay fungi infecting the tree.

HOW TO PRUNE

- Only remove branches that are 1/3-1/2 the diameter of the main trunk.
 - Larger branches will not seal correctly which will lead to decay.
- When pruning, use the 3-cut pruning technique to prevent bark ripping and allow the best wound seal.
 - Cut 1: go out a few inches on the branch & cut from the bottom upward and only half-way through the branch.
 - Cut 2: cut the branch off further out from cut 1, removing the main weight of the branch.
 - Cut 3: make a clean, smooth cut just outside of the branch collar.
- Do not leave a stump of a branch behind or cut a flush cut.
 - The tree cannot seal the wounds from these and it will lead to decay.
- Do not treat the pruning cut with anything, allow the tree to seal the wound naturally.

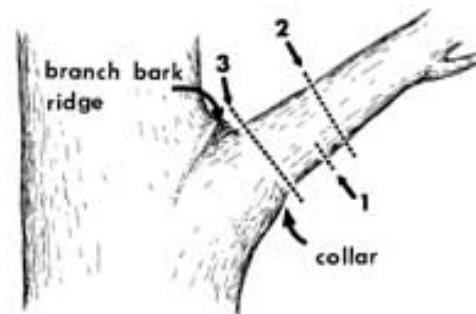


Photo from Colorado State University Extension



Service, Bugwood.org
Photo from Joseph O'Brien, USDA Forest

PRUNING TOOLS

- Use the correct tool for the size of branch to be removed.
- Pruning Shears: branches up to 3/4 inches in diameter.
- Lopping Shears: branches up to 1.5 inches in diameter.
- Hand Saws: branches over 1 inch in diameter.
- Pole Saws: For extended reach.
- Chain Saws: larger branches.