

Proper Tree Pruning

Why, When and How Much to Prune?



Why Prune?

For future health - Prune a tree to establish good branch structure and spacing, and one central trunk.



For safety - Pruning assures that the vision or sight lines of motorists, bikers or pedestrians are not compromised. Prune limbs to reduce conflicts with traffic signs, utilities or to prevent potential hazards.



When to Prune?

Prune when the tree is dormant, typically November through March in Wisconsin. The worst time to prune a tree is in the spring when tree buds and leaves are growing.



For aesthetics - A well maintained tree looks good and adds value to your property.

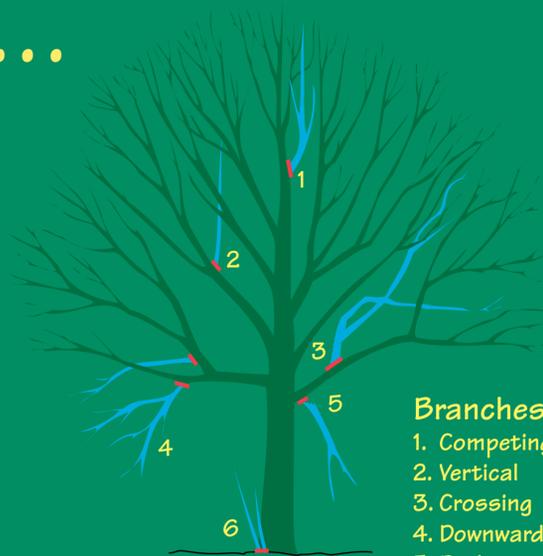
How Much to Prune?

Avoid removing more than 25% of the live branches from a tree, no matter what the tree's age, size or species.



What to Do...

- ✓ Before pruning take a step back and look at your tree.
- ✓ Envision your tree after it's pruned. Remember you can always take more off, but can't put it back on.
- ✓ Always have a purpose in mind before a cut is made.



Branches to Prune

1. Competing leader
2. Vertical
3. Crossing
4. Downward growing
5. Broken or dead
6. Suckers

What Not to Do...



Avoid leaving too much or too little of the pruned branch.



Never top your tree. Don't make the mistake of cutting off the top of a tree's canopy to reduce its size. Besides being unattractive, topping leads to weak growth and decay.

Stub Cut – (leaving too much)

Finish cuts should never leave a stub that a cap can hang from.

Flush Cut – (leaving too little)

A flush cut opens the tree to decay and prevents proper and complete wound closure. Compare the results of a flush cut (left) and proper cut (right).



How to Prune



- 1) Pole saw & lopper head
- 2) Hand saws
- 3) Helmet & safety glasses
- 4) Hand pruner
- 5) Leather gloves
- 6) Long-handled lopper

Tools to Use

Tools should be sharp so as not to crush limbs. Loppers and hand pruners should be of the bypass or scissors type. Saw blades should have triple-edged teeth. A hard hat, leather gloves and eye protection are recommended.



Before using a pole saw, always check for overhead utilities.

Avoid this!



3 – Step Cut

Avoid tearing bark by using these three sequential cuts when pruning a limb you cannot support with one hand, while cutting with the other. Torn bark often leads to decay.



Step 1

At least 12 - 18" from the final cut, make an undercut approximately 1/3 of the way through the branch.



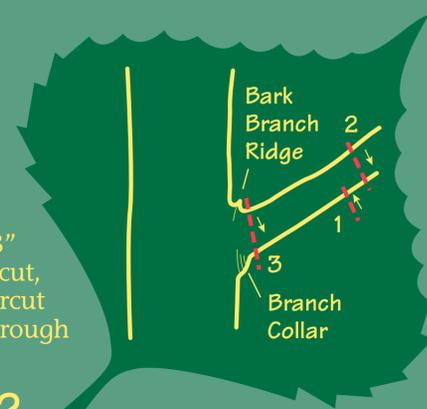
Step 2

Outside the first cut, sawing from the top down, completely remove the branch.



Step 3

Begin the final cut outside of the branch bark ridge, continuing at a slightly outward angle, finishing the cut just outside the branch collar. It is not necessary nor recommended to paint the wound.



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