

PROPER TREE PRUNING



This Mesquite was pruned for stability; "crown thinning" reduces wind resistance and storm damage.

The value of pruning

In spring, trees are flush with new growth. In a natural setting, a tree does not require pruning to remain healthy. However, when planted in the landscape around structures, streets and sidewalks, trees require some pruning for safety and aesthetic concerns. Before pruning a tree, it is important to understand why you should prune. Here are some of the most common reasons for pruning:

- Remove dead or damaged branches
- Remove crowded, crossing or rubbing limbs
- Keep limbs from blocking sight lines or encroaching on structures, streets and walkways
- Improve tree structure and stability to avoid storm damage

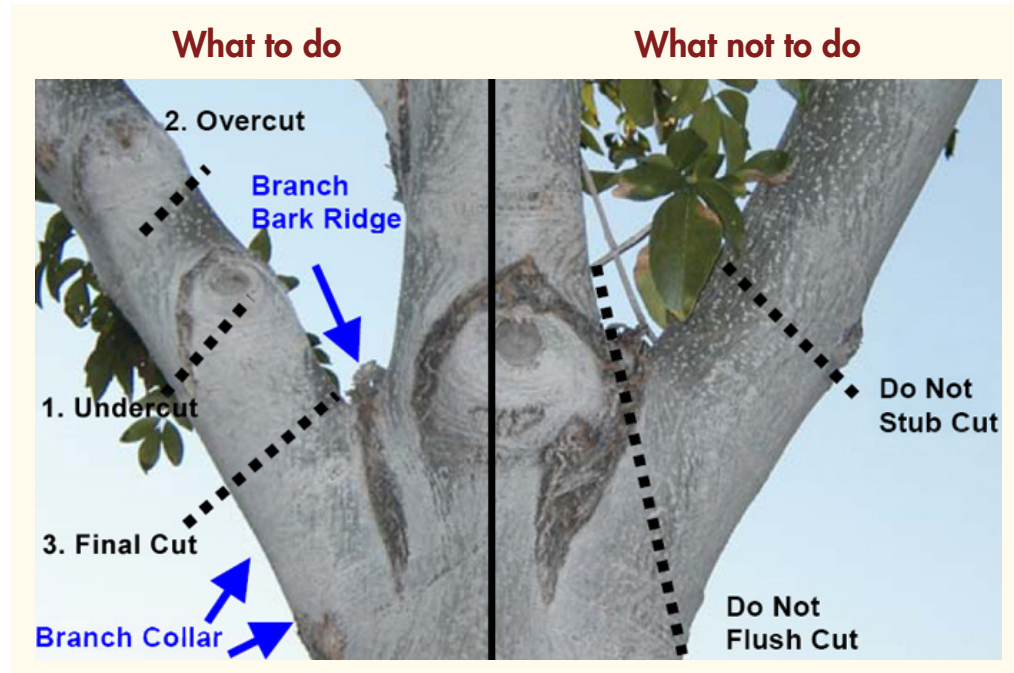
“The ideal time of year to prune your trees is between October and April.”

- Do not prune a newly-planted tree during the first year, except to remove dead branches
- Cut back to the union of two branches, not in the middle of a branch
- Pruning paints are not necessary and can cause damage to your tree
- On large branches, use the three-cut method to prevent bark from tearing down along the trunk (diagram below)
- If there is a good reason to prune a tree, pruning can be done almost any time of the year. Use caution when heavily pruning just after spring growth as it may stress the tree.

Proper pruning practices

When you are properly equipped with good tools and knowledge, you are ready to go to work. Listed below are some general guidelines to remember when pruning:

- Do not remove more than 25% of a mature tree's foliage
- Make cuts that leave a wound which can close properly to help avoid decay



Tools for pruning

Having proper tools to prune your tree is important to the health of the plant material. Limbs up to ½ inch in diameter can be pruned with hand pruners. Long-handled pruning loppers can handle limbs up to 1 inch in diameter but a special pruning saw is needed for larger limbs. Hand pruners and loppers should be of the scissor or bypass type rather than anvil type. Hedging shears or power hedge trimmers should not be used to prune trees because they will not be able to make proper cuts and will damage the tree.

In addition to proper cutting tools, make sure you have safety equipment. It is a good idea to wear a long-sleeved shirt, long pants and closed shoes when pruning; additionally, wear safety glasses, a hat and gloves to help prevent an injury. Unless you are a trained tree worker, avoid using a ladder or climbing a tree to trim it. Most importantly, never attempt to prune a tree that is near a utility line!

Lastly, DLC recommends that you never top trees. Topping is the indiscriminate cutting back of tree branches to stubs. This practice stresses and



*Above: Hand saw and safety equipment.
Right: Bypass loppers*



disfigures trees and creates hazardous, weakly-attached, new branches. It also creates an added maintenance expense as topped trees require more frequent pruning.

Bad cut



Bad cuts can severely damage trees and stunt their growth

Good cut



A fresh cut done properly with the right tools will promote the health of the tree

End results



A proper cut will heal quickly and put as little strain on the tree as possible

For large trees or if you are in doubt, call a Certified Arborist. An Arborist can determine what type of pruning is needed and provide the service of a trained crew with the appropriate safety equipment and liability insurance. You can find a Certified Arborist at <http://isa-arbor.com/findArborist/verifyArbByLoc.aspx>.

