

8 Things You Should Know About Trees

#1: Don't Top Trees!



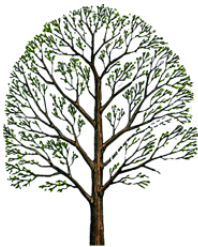
Never cut main branches back to stubs. Many people mistakenly “top” trees because they grow into utility wires, interfere with views or sunlight, or simply grow so large that they worry the landowner.

Unfortunately, the topping process is often self-defeating. Ugly, bushy, weakly attached limbs usually grow back higher than the original branches.

Proper pruning can remove excessive growth without the problems topping creates. In addition, many arborists say that topping is the worst thing you can do for the health of a tree. It starves the tree by drastically reducing its food-making ability and makes the tree more susceptible to insects and disease.

The appearance of a properly pruned tree is like a good haircut: hardly noticeable at first glance.

#2: Use The 1/3 and 1/4 Rules of Pruning



Never remove more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of a tree's crown in a season.

Where possible, try to encourage side branches that form angles that are $\frac{1}{3}$ off vertical (10:00 or 2:00 positions).

For most species, the tree should have a single trunk.

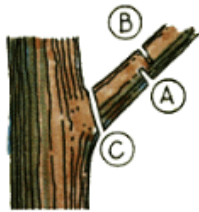
Ideally, main side branches should be at least $\frac{1}{3}$ smaller than the diameter of the trunk.

If removal of a main branch is necessary, cut it back to where it is attached to another large branch or the trunk. Do not truncate or leave a stub. [See No.3 for how to make a pruning cut.](#)

For most deciduous (broadleaf) trees, don't prune up from the bottom any more than $\frac{1}{3}$ of the tree's total height.

“We envision a world where trees and forests are abundant, healthy, and sustainable, and highly valued by all people.”

#3: How to Make a Pruning Cut



Large Limbs:

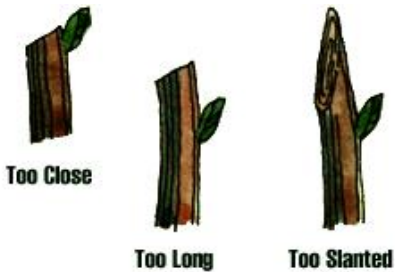
A: Make a partial cut from beneath.

B: Make a second cut from above several inches out and allow the limb to fall.

C: Complete the job with a final cut just outside the branch collar.

Small Branches:

Make a sharp clean cut, just beyond a lateral bud or other branch.



No shade tree? Blame not the sun but yourself. —Chinese Proverb

#4: The Value of Mulch



A tree's best friend, mulch insulates soil, retains moisture, keeps out weeds, prevents soil compaction, reduces lawnmower damage, and adds an aesthetic touch to a yard or street. Remove any grass within the mulch area, an area from 3 to 10 feet in diameter, depending on tree size. Pour wood chips or bark pieces 2 to 4 inches within the circle, but not touching the trunk.

"To exist as a nation, to prosper as a state, and to live as a people, we must have trees."

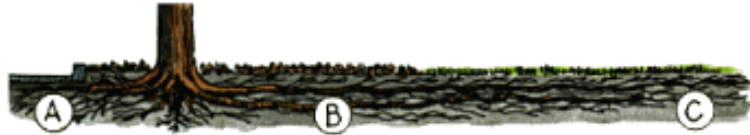
—Theodore Roosevelt

#5: Where Roots Really Grow

A: Because roots need oxygen, they don't normally grow in the compacted oxygen-poor soil under paved streets.

B: The framework of major roots usually lies less than 8 to 12 inches below the surface.

C: Roots often grow outward to a diameter one to two times the height of the trees.



"The best friend on earth of man is the tree. When we use the tree respectfully and economically, we have one of the greatest resources of the earth."

—Frank Lloyd Wright

#6: Girdling Kills Trees



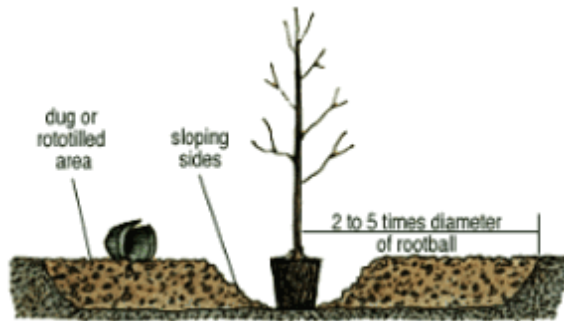
Girdling is any activity that injures the bark of a tree trunk and extends around much of the trunk's circumference.

Such injuries, often caused by lawnmowers and weed trimmers, destroy the tree's most vital membranes, the layers that conduct water and minerals from the roots to the leaves and return the food produced by the leaves to the rest of the tree.

"I am myself and what is around me, and if I do not save it, it shall not save me."

—Jose Ortega y Gasset

#7: How to Plant a Containerized Tree



If a tree is planted correctly, it will grow twice as fast and live at least twice as long as one that is incorrectly planted.

Ideally, dig or roto till an area one foot deep and approximately 5 times the diameter of the root ball. The prepared soil will encourage root growth beyond the root ball and results in a healthier tree.

In transplanting, be sure to keep soil around the roots. Always handle your tree by the ball, not by the trunk or branches. Don't let the root ball dry out. Help prevent root girdling by vertically cutting any roots that show tendencies to circle the root ball.

After placing the tree, pack soil firmly but not tightly around the root ball. Water the soil and place a protective 3-foot circle of mulch around the tree.

It is my Arbor Day wish that we care passionately about our communities. That we build green and graceful cities. That we no longer build and neglect and abandon and move on. But that we first care for where we are. That we rebuild and restore, plant and replant. That we make gardens of our cities.

—John Rosenow

#8: Your Street Trees May Be City Trees



If you live in a town or city, the trees near the street (often between the sidewalk and street), are probably city-owned. The city should have a program for planting and caring for these trees. You should support your city forestry program and encourage your town to be a [*Tree City USA*](#).

Respect local ordinances as to what trees can be planted, how to prune, etc. Encourage your town to fully fund a quality community forestry program.

