

# 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.

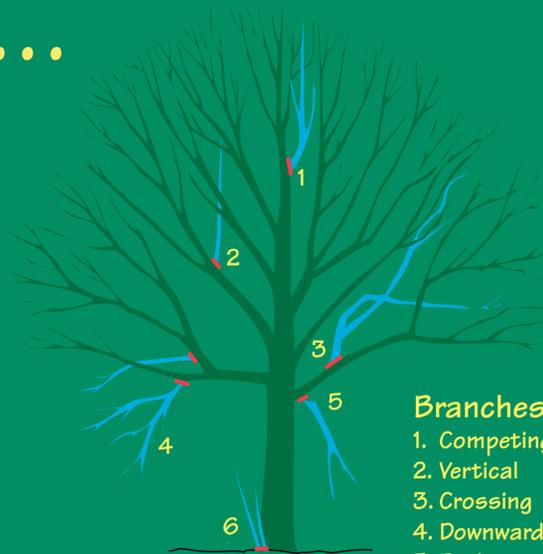
### How Much to Prune?

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.



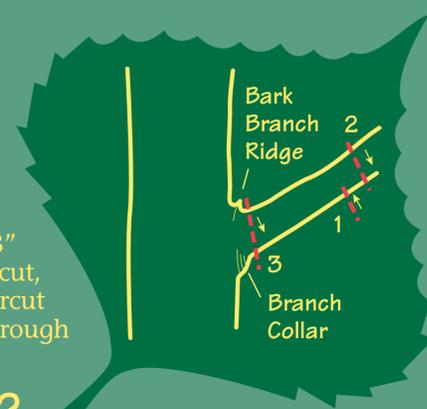
#### Step 2

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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