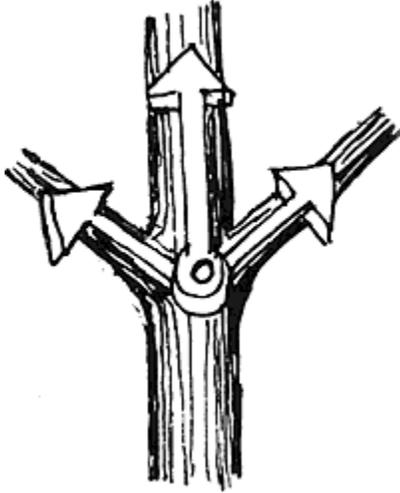
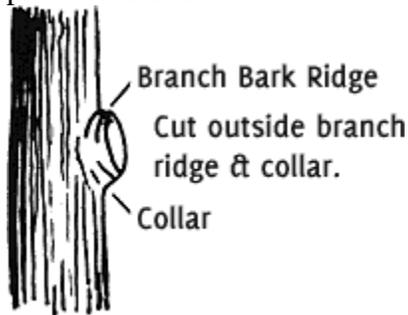


Keys to Good Pruning

1. Begin visual inspection at the top of the tree and work downward.



2. Use The $\frac{1}{3}$; and $\frac{1}{4}$ Rules of Pruning
 1. Never remove more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of a tree's crown in a season
 2. Ideally, main side branches should be at least $\frac{1}{3}$; smaller than the diameter of the trunk.
 3. For most deciduous (broadleaf) trees, don't prune up from the bottom any more than $\frac{1}{3}$; of the tree's total height.
 4. Where possible, try to encourage side branches that form angles that are $\frac{1}{3}$; off vertical that form "10 o'clock" or "2 o'clock" angles with the trunk.
3. For most species, the tree should have a single trunk. Identify the best leader and later branches before you begin pruning and remove defective parts before pruning for form.
4. Don't worry about protecting pruning cuts. For aesthetics, you may feel better painting large wounds but it doesn't prevent or reduce decay.
5. Keep tools sharp. One-hand pruning shears with curved blades work best on young trees.
6. For high branches use a pole pruner. A major job on a big tree should be done by a professional arborist.



7. For larger branches, cut outside the branch bark and ridge collar (swollen area). Do not leave a protruding stub. If the limb is too small to have formed a collar cut close.
8. When simply shortening a small branch, make the cut at a lateral bud or another lateral branch. Favor a bud that will produce a branch that will grow in desired direction (usually

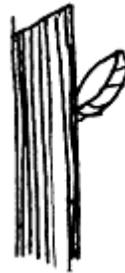
outward). The cut should be sharp and clean and made at a slight angle about ¼ inch beyond the bud.



Correct Pruning Cut



Too Close



Too Long



Too Slanted

Now that you know the pruning basics learn what steps you should take throughout your trees life.

Learn what you prune annually.

Annual Tree Pruning Steps from Planting to Maturity



Tree pruning, trimming, or cutting is an ongoing process throughout the life of your tree. After selecting the right tree and carefully planting it, early pruning is the most important thing you can do for a young tree.

Proper pruning will save you money and give you a safer more beautiful, healthier, and easier-to-maintain tree. Remember what you do to your tree in its first few years of life will affect its shape, strength, and even its life span.

Tree Pruning Steps at Planting

Leave as much of the entire leaf surface as possible to manufacture food that will build a larger root system. Roots will be larger after one year if left unpruned.

Do prune the following and trim close to the trunk:

- Broken branches.
- Branches competing with the leader.
- Swollen branches from insect eggs or stings.
- Remove tree tags.



Good



Bad

[Learn Pruning Techniques with our Virtual Pruning Guide.](#)

Tree Pruning Steps at Planting



Good



Bad

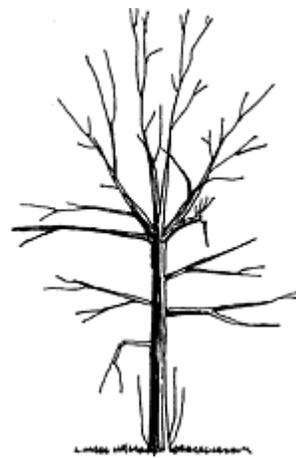
Tree Pruning: After 3 to 4 Years

Root growth should be well on its way to anchoring the transplant and expanding the size necessary to nourish the growing branches.

- Cut off root suckers and sprouts in the crown.
- Thin excessive branches to reduce competition for light, water, and nutrients.
- Remove codominant leader.
- Remove a few of the lowest limbs but others are temporarily left to help the trunk develop more taper and strength.
- Eliminate branches that rub or growing in undesirable direction.
- Remove narrow angled branches.



Good



Bad

[Learn Pruning Techniques with our Virtual Pruning Guide.](#)

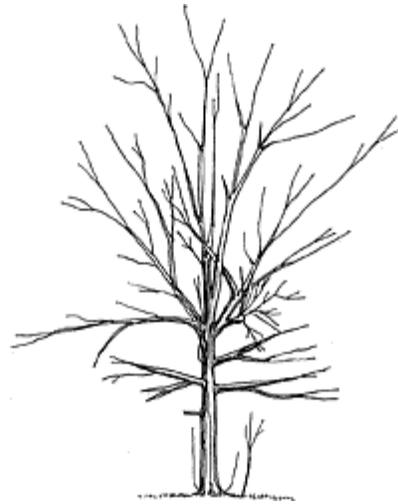
Tree Pruning: After 5 to 7 Years

Now it is time to make a good tree even better.

- Lower limbs are pruned off to **raise** the bottom of the crown well out of the way of human heads. The lowest limbs are now permanent limbs. Please note: branches **DO NOT** move upward as a tree grows taller. The center of a branch at 5 feet will always be at 5 feet.
- Cut back a few of the higher up branches so they don't protrude beyond the graceful outline of the crown.
- Inspect tree to see if you need to remove a branch here or there for even spacing.



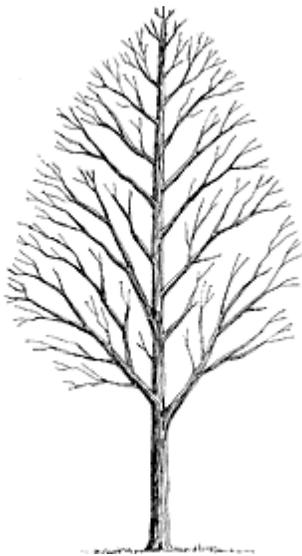
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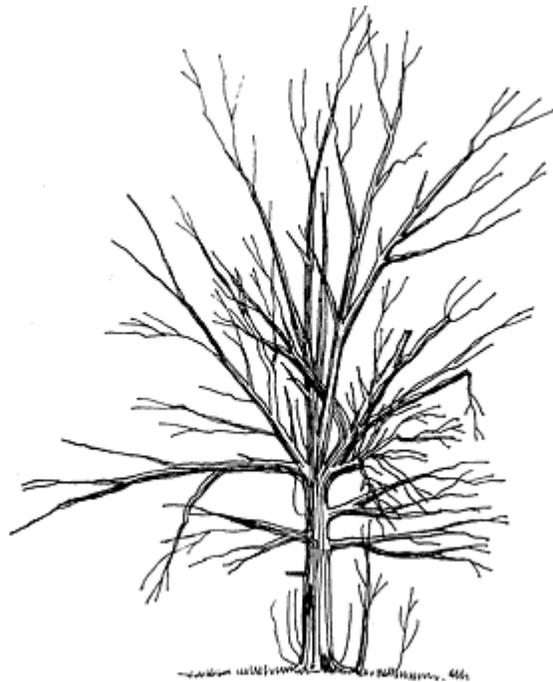
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Tree Pruning: 15 Years After Planting



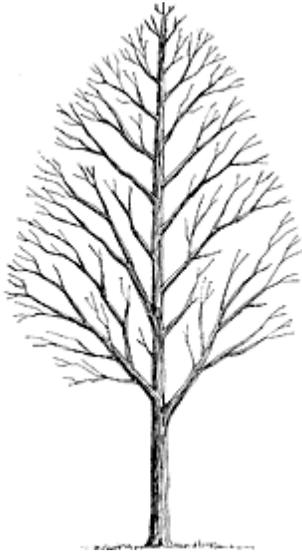
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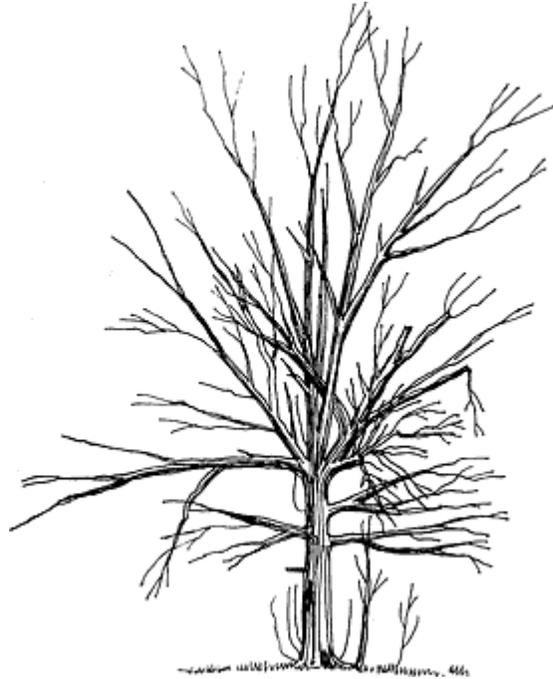
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- [Next Tip: Pest & Disease Problems](#)
 - **Tree Pruning: 15 Years After Planting**

- With proper pruning at the beginning of your trees life your tree will have a better chance of surviving extreme conditions such as wind storms, ice, and drought. That is because proper pruning gave strength to the branches.
- Early each spring, look for dead or damaged limbs. If you do have dead or damage limbs remove using proper pruning methods.



Good



Bad

- [Learn Pruning Techniques with our Virtual Pruning Guide.](#)

9 Tree Care Tips & Techniques



Nine comprehensive tree care tips will take you step by step, from selecting and planting the right tree to the care and upkeep of a mature tree.

It is important to remember that proper tree care starts when you select a tree and that what you do to your tree in its first few years of life will affect its shape, strength, and even its life span. Following these steps will make sure tree gets on the correct foot and keep it healthy throughout its life.

1. [Find a Tree](#)
2. [Selecting a Healthy Tree](#)
3. [Tree Planting](#)
4. [The Importance of Mulch](#)
5. [Tree Watering](#)
6. [When to Prune](#)
7. [Keys to Good Tree Pruning](#)
8. [Annual Tree Pruning Steps from Planting to Maturity](#)
9. [How to Identify Pest and Disease Problems](#)

Additional Tree Care Information

In addition to this page, we have several free online resources for more detailed tree care, pruning, and planting techniques:

- [Online Tree Pruning Guide](#)
- [Free Tree Care Tips from Tree City Bulletins](#)
- [Plant the Right Tree in the Right Place](#)
- [The Arbor Day Foundation Blog](#)

Arbor Day Foundation Forum



Get answers to your questions on the [Arbor Day Message Board](#), an online community of tree planters and professionals.

Tree Care Products



Maximize the health and growth of your trees with [high quality tree care products](#)

How to Identify Pest & Disease Problems



To properly diagnose a pest or disease problem begin by contacting the Cooperative Extension Service in your county or parish.

Your local Cooperative Extension agent is the best source for assistance with home gardening pest and disease questions. With the help of volunteer Master Gardeners, your County Cooperative Extension can quickly answer most inquiries about plant health care and local conditions. Extension specialists are also available to perform pest and disease diagnosis for homeowners and professionals—including certified arborists, nursery growers, landscapers, and orchardists.

Our online [Tree Health Guide](#) provides immediate access to a network of professional arborists, foresters, and Cooperative Extension Service agents to provide effective best management practices for insect problems and plant diseases.

You can also get help and answers to your questions from other [tree planters and professionals in our online forum](#).