



Pruning Terms to Know

- Pruning is the removal of unnecessary plant parts to improve fruit, flower, form or fitness.
- Crown Reduction is the selective removal of live branches to decrease the height or spread of a tree's crown. Use of reduction pruning cuts is required.
- A thinning cut is the removal of a lateral branch at its point of origin. Take the little; leave the big.
- A reduction or cut removes the end of a branch by cutting back to a lateral branch **at least** 1/3 the diameter of the branch being removed. Take the big; leave the little.

If the branch is 1/3 the diameter of the parent branch or larger, water and nutrients will be redirected into the lateral branch and it will assume the growth responsibility of the removed branch. The tree will produce fewer sprouts at the point of the pruning cut and the tree's natural growth habit will be preserved.

- A heading cut is the removal of a branch or trunk to a stub or to a lateral branch too small to assume the growth responsibility of the branch being cut.
- 1/2 is the amount of foliage that should remain in the lower 2/3 of a tree's crown.
- 1/3 diameter is the minimum size to qualify a lateral branch for a reduction cut.
- 25% is the maximum percentage of a tree's foliage to be removed in any year.
- The branch bark ridge is a furl of bark between a branch and its host branch or trunk.
- The branch collar is a "shoulder" area where a branch joins another branch or stem created by the overlapping xylem tissues.
- The branch protection zone consists of the branch bark ridge and branch collar. This zone of tissue is where chemicals are located that aid the tree in sealing off the pruning injury. Cutting into this zone disrupts this strong physical barrier to prevent entry of decay into the tree after a pruning cut.
- Stub cuts are thinning cuts that are left too long in length. These stubs prevent proper closure of the pruning cut just outside the branch protection zone. They often die back, creating an entry point for decay to migrate into the host stem.
- Topping is the practice of reducing the height or spread of a tree using heading cuts. Although widely used, topping is an **unacceptable** pruning practice that provides short term control of tree size but causes serious future problems.
- Lion's Tailing is the common but improper *pruning* practice that strips out the interior branches, leaving limbs looking like lion's tails. Some people wrongly believe that over-thinning makes trees safer. But trees are often more hazardous because the force of the wind is captured in the heavy branch tips, making branches more vulnerable to breakage.