

# Tree Pruning Basics

## Why Prune?

### (1) SAFETY

- Removing branches that could fall and cause injury or property damage
- Trimming branches that interfere with lines of sight on streets or driveways
- Removing branches that grow into utility lines

### (2) HEALTH

- Removing dead or broken limbs
- Thinning, where necessary, for long-term growth

### (3) AESTHETICS

#### NOTE:

Avoid pruning trees when you might increase susceptibility to important pests:

- in areas where oak wilt exists,
- avoid pruning oaks in the spring and early summer,
- prune trees susceptible to fire blight only during the dormant season.

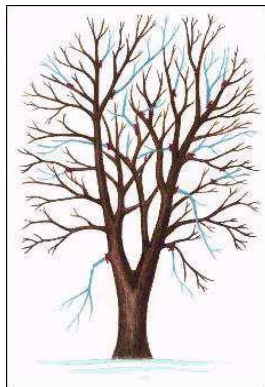
## Tree Responses to Pruning

(Pruning = Wounding)

- Increases Shoot Growth
- Dwarfs Young Plants
- Stimulates Growth on Spring Flowering Plants
- Reduces Food Supply to Roots
- Stops Root Growth

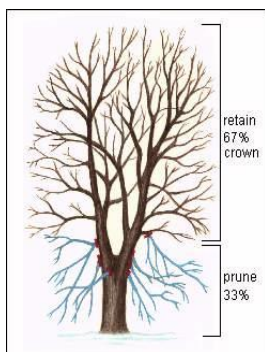
## Pruning Techniques

**NOTE:** Do not remove more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the living crown of a tree at one time. If necessary to remove more, do it over successive years.



### **Crown Thinning** (Reduce weight, increase light)

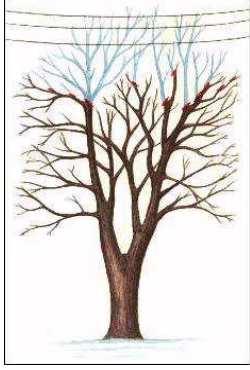
- Start by removing dead branches
- Remove any branches that rub or cross another branch
- Favor branches with strong, U-shaped angles of attachment, while removing weaker V-shaped angles of attachment.
- Discourage development of co-dominant stems by ensuring lateral branches are no more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the diameter of the stem.



### **Crown Raising** (Greater clearance, visual appeal)

- Always maintain live branches on at least  $\frac{2}{3}$  of a tree's total height.
- Removing too many lower branches will hinder the development of a strong stem.
- Remove basal sprouts (suckers) and vigorous epicormic sprouts.

## Tree Pruning Basics



### **Crown Reduction** (Under power lines, overhangs)

**NOTE:** NEVER prune trees touching or near utility lines; instead consult your local utility company.

- Use crown reduction only when absolutely necessary. Make the pruning cut at a lateral branch that is at least 1/3 the diameter of the stem to be removed. **DON'T** leave stubs.
- If necessary to remove more than half of the foliage from a branch, remove the entire branch.

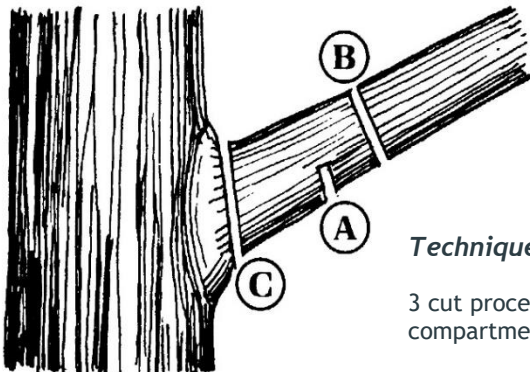
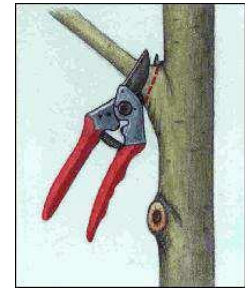
## Pruning “How To”



Cut beyond the 'branch bark ridge' and collar

### *Technique for Small Branch Removal*

- Use hand pruners for diameter  $\leq$  1 inch
- Use loppers for diameter  $\leq$  2 inches



### *Technique for Large Limbs*

3 cut process prevents bark stripping and aids in compartmentalization (seal of wound)

## Additional References:

<https://www.austintexas.gov/department/tree-information-center>

<https://www.texasoakwilt.org>

<https://travis-tx.tamu.edu/horticulture/>

<https://www.tfs.tamu.edu>



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Information compiled by Yvonne Schneider, Travis County Master Gardener, June 2022  
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