

THIN MATURE TREES DON'T TOP THEM

Prune Mature Trees Properly for Longevity, Safety and Beauty

Proper tree pruning removes dying, diseased or injured wood, crossing or crowded branches, restructures tree shape, or reduces tree height. Proper thinning of the tree's canopy increases light and air circulation, and reduces wind resistance and the occurrence of some diseases. Pruning also influences growth and flower bud formation.

There are two types of pruning cuts: thinning and heading.

- A thinning cut removes a branch at its point of origin or to another branch. Trees pruned with thinning cuts are more open and retain a more natural tree shape.

- A heading cut tops off the central leader or main branches back to a stub or to a branch that is too small. Heading cuts disfigure a tree's natural shape and result in vigorous, upright shoots from latent buds just below the cut. These shoots are weakly attached.

Pruning Tips:

- Make pruning cuts, just outside of the branch collar.
- Prune regularly to avoid making large cuts that remove branches 3-inches or larger in diameter.
- For clean cuts on large limbs, use a 3-saw cut to avoid limb breakage and bark damage. See diagram.
- Do not remove more than 25% of the foliage within a growing season as it triggers rapid regrowth.
- Prune after leaf fall and during winter or dormant months. Branch structure is easy to see at this time.
- Broken, dead, or pest infested branches can be removed any time of year.



- 1) Cut part way through the branch at A
- 2) Cut it off at B
- 3) Make the final cut along C-D



Do not leave stubs. Stubs allow pest and diseases to invade.



Topping vs. Thinning

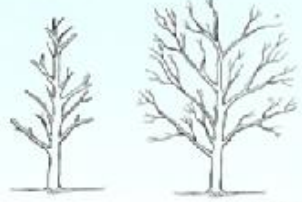


BEFORE PRUNING

TOPPING, NO!

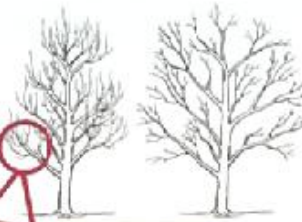
THINNING AND CROWN REDUCTION, YES!

1 year later
The topped tree is stubbed and only a remnant of a lovely tree remains.



1 year later
If pruned properly, corrective thinning and crown reduction cuts occur but beauty and form are retained.

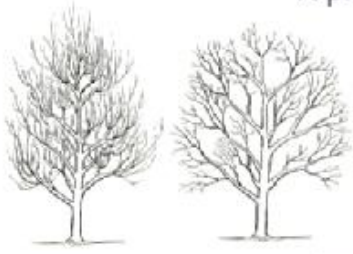
3 years later
Vigorous upright sprouts emerge. Sprouts are weakly attached and prone to breakage. They are abnormal, grow rapidly, and cause the tree to lose its natural shape.



3 years later
Growth of thinned branches is spread evenly throughout canopy, maintaining its natural shape.

When severely pruned, a tree branch will form many vigorous upright sprouts. These sprouts are weakly attached and look unsightly over time.

6 years later
A topped tree is as tall as the pruned tree yet far bushier and more prone to limb failure.



6 years later
A properly pruned tree is safer with strongly attached branches, more beautiful in form and its size better controlled.

Do Not Top Trees!!

Start out right by planting trees appropriate for available space at tree's maturity. Prune a young tree for structure and form during the first 3-5 years.

For more information call your local University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners or visit the UCCE California Gardening website <http://cagardenweb.ucdavis.edu>

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