

Pruning Landscape Trees

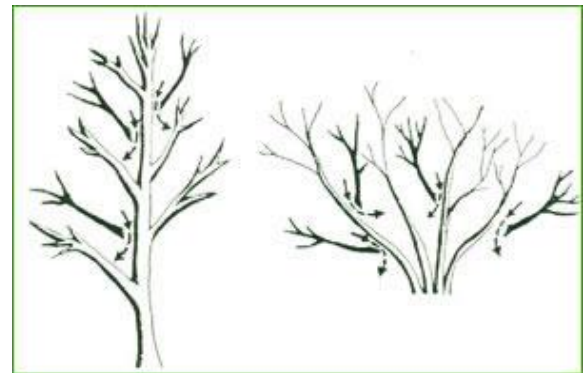
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Two Basic Types of Pruning Cuts

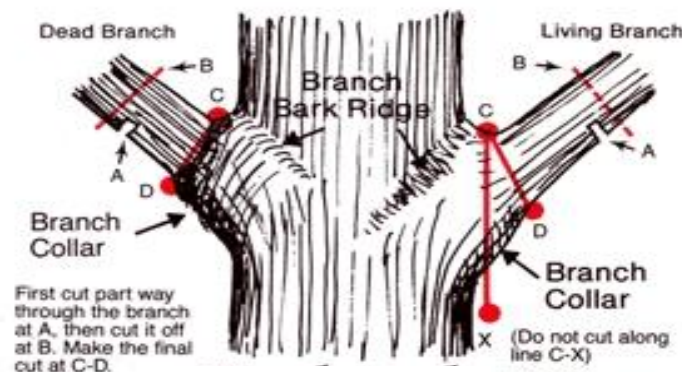
1. **Heading Cut** – Cutting plant stems back to a bud, twig or stub.
Potential problems – a stub is often left and may become infested with insects or diseases, vigorous growth may be stimulated, and the new growth may be weakly attached and could split or crack under pressure. This may also negatively affect the desirable, graceful arching habit of some shrubs.
2. **Thinning Cut** – The removal of a branch at its point of origin or cutting back a branch to a lateral branch about 1/3 the diameter of the branch being removed.
Advantages – No stub is left, the plant retains its natural shape, and vigorous new shoot growth is avoided.
Caution: removing more than about 30% of the foliage can stimulate new growth even if thinning cuts are used.



Fall Back to Laterals

Always cut back to a bud or another lateral branch. Future growth will be diverted to this side branch, and the tree will be able to cover the wound to prevent disease and decay.

If the branch to be removed is too large to easily support the weight with one hand, use the three cut method to prevent tearing bark. The first cut is an undercut several inches from the branch collar (A in drawing). The second cut is at B. The stub is removed last by making a cut from C to D.

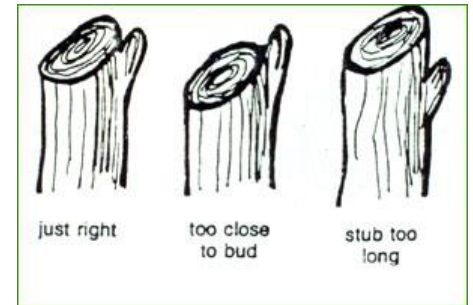


Avoid “Snubbing”

DO NOT crop off a branch end without cutting back to a lateral branch or bud. Trees cannot recover from this type of wound and it becomes a source of decay that can spread back into otherwise healthy parts of the tree.

Locating a Cut

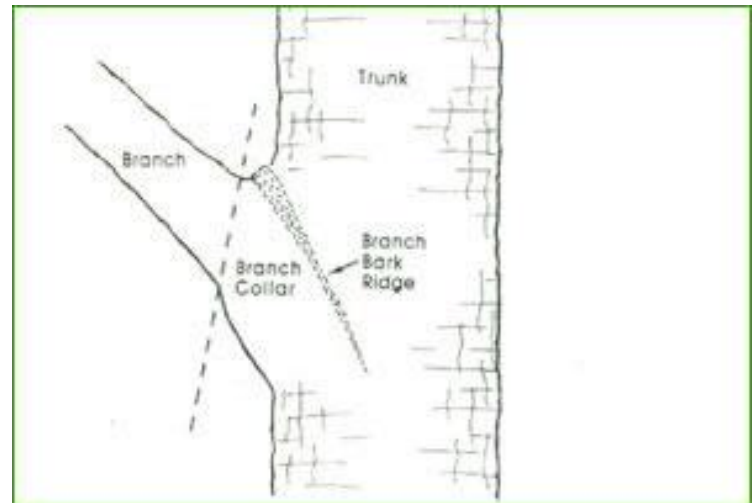
Once you decide to cut a limb, avoid cutting too close to the trunk or leaving a stub. First, locate the branch bark ridge at the point where the top of the branch joins the main trunk. Second, note where the branch collar is located. This swollen region is on the bottom side of the branch where it joins with the trunk. Cut just outside the bark ridge and branch collar (Figure 6).



The bark ridge and branch collar region help prevent diseases from entering and decay from spreading in the plant. For this reason, avoid damaging this area. Support the branch as you cut to prevent the bark from tearing and making the wound larger.

Pruning Tools

Proper tools should be used to make a clean pruning cut and to minimize damaging plant tissue. If the plant tissue is crushed or torn it can leave the plant susceptible to disease and insect problems. In addition, more time will be needed by the plant to have tissues grow over the wound. Pruning tools should be the correct size for the job and be made of tempered steel that can hold a sharp edge. Hand pruners should be used to cut branches that are less than one-half inch in diameter. Lopping shears should be used for branches between one-half and 1 inch thick. A bow saw or pruning saw should be used to cut branches larger than 1 inch thick. Be sure to make a clean cut with the proper tool.



Sanitizing Pruning Tools

Pruning tools should be disinfected after each cut, under ideal circumstances, to avoid spreading diseases from plant to plant. At the very minimum, disinfect pruning tools after finishing one plant but before beginning to prune the next plant. To sanitize tools, dip the cutting edge in a disinfectant solution such as denatured alcohol, methanol or diluted household bleach (1 part bleach plus 9 parts of water). An alternative is to spray the cutting blade with a disinfectant solution. When using bleach, make sure to apply a thin layer of oil to the blade before storing to avoid rusting of the tool.

Pruning paints and asphalt emulsions are not recommended for use on pruning cuts as they may actually seal in disease-causing organisms or promote rot.

More information on pruning:

[How To Prune Coniferous Evergreen Trees BUL 644](#)

[How to Prune Deciduous Landscape Trees BUL 819](#)

[Pruning Your Own Shrubs and Small Trees](#) (DVD)

1987 # 360 Price: \$35.00 (place order online)

Sources* <http://web.cals.uidaho.edu/idahogardens/tag/pruning-2/>