

compatibility with other components of a landscape are all major concerns. Proper pruning, with an understanding of tree biology, can maintain good tree health and structure while enhancing the aesthetic and economic values of our landscapes.

When to Prune

Growth and wound closure are maximized if the pruning of live limbs is done in the winter or before growth begins in early spring. Plant growth rate can be reduced if live branches are pruned soon after the initial spring growth flush. This is the period when trees have just expended a great deal of stored energy to produce roots, foliage, and early shoot growth. Pruning at this time can result in significant stress, especially for older trees and trees already in poor health. Some trees, such as maples and birches, tend to "bleed" if pruned early in the spring. While unsightly, this bleeding is of little consequence to the tree.

Removal of diseased, broken, or dead limbs can be accomplished during any season, with little negative effect on the tree.

A few tree diseases, such as oak wilt, can be spread when pruning wounds provide access to pathogens (disease-causing agents). Trees susceptible to these diseases should not be pruned during active transmission periods.



Making Proper Pruning Cuts

Pruning cuts should be made just outside the branch collar. The branch collar contains trunk or parent branch tissue and should not be damaged or removed. If the trunk collar has grown out on a dead limb to be removed, make the cut just beyond the collar. Do not cut the collar.

If a large limb is to be removed, its weight should first be reduced. This is done by making an undercut about 12 to 18 inches (30 to 46 cm) from the limb's point of attachment. Make a second cut from the top, directly above or a few inches farther out on the limb. Doing so removes the limb, leaving the 12- to 18-inch (30- to 46-cm) stub. Remove the stub by cutting back to the branch collar. This technique reduces the possibility of tearing the bark.

