

A close-up portrait of a woman with light-colored eyes and a serious expression. She is wearing an ornate, golden headpiece with intricate scrollwork and floral designs. The lighting is soft, highlighting her facial features. The background is dark and textured, suggesting a forest or garden setting.

A Look At ...

A LOOK AT ... FROM AN INDEPENDENT PERSPECTIVE from
National Organization Responding Against HUJE that seek to harm the Green Space Industry (NORAHG)

Pruning Trees

A Look At Ornamental
Plant Management

**No Flush Cuts,
Gutting,
or Lifting !**

January 6th, 2013

Howard Garrett

Media Release — Newsletter

Selected And Adapted Excerpts

Pruning Trees

No Flush Cuts, Gutting, or Lifting !

Introduction

Is it time to thin trees and cut off the lower limbs ?

The answers to these common pruning questions might surprise you.

There seems to be an abundance of curious tree pruning advice still around.

Let's try to straighten it out.

It IS a good time to prune.

(See next segment.)

However, pruning too much is the most common pruning mistake.

FEW TREES NEED MAJOR PRUNING EVERY YEAR.

Other than some fruit trees, **FEW TREES NEED ANNUAL THINNING.**

Unless lower limbs are a physical interference, **THEY SHOULD BE LEFT ON THE TREE.**

TREES CAN BE SEVERELY DAMAGED OR EVEN KILLED BY REMOVING TOO MANY LOWER LIMBS.

Plus it looks bad.

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A flush cut that will lead
to a cavity in the tree

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Timing

Landscape trees can be pruned AT ANY TIME OF THE YEAR, but THE BEST TIME IS FROM FALL TO LATE WINTER.

Fruit trees should be pruned from MID-WINTER UP UNTIL BUD BREAK.

Certain fruit trees, like peach trees, should only be pruned JUST BEFORE BUD BREAK because pruning induces bud break and flowering.

For fruit trees like peach, early flowers and late freezes spell no fruit.

Amount Of Pruning

Pruning trees is part science and part art.

Don't try to change the character and overall, long-term shape of a tree, and don't remove lower limbs to raise the canopy.

Low-growing limbs exist for a reason.

It's very unnatural to strip tree trunks bare.

If you think that looks good, think again.

Remove dead, diseased, broken or damaged limbs, and the weakest of crossing limbs.

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Remove limbs that grow toward the center of the tree and limbs that are dangerous or physically interfere with buildings or activities.

It is very important to remove one of the co-dominant upward shoots to leave strong growth without « V » shaped crotches.

Thinning to eliminate a certain percentage of the foliage is usually a MISTAKE.

Heavy thinning of a tree's canopy throws the plant out of balance, inviting wind and ice storm damage.

The resulting stress attracts diseases and insect pests.

Gutting (heavy interior pruning) is NEVER APPROPRIATE.

Pruning Cuts

Pruning cuts should be made with SHARP TOOLS.

Hand tools such as bow saws, Japanese pruning saws, loppers, and pole pruners are good for small limbs.

Chain saws can be used for larger limbs, but only with great care and a thorough understanding of the equipment.

FLUSH CUTS SHOULD NEVER BE MADE.

Cuts leaving 1/16-inch stubs are also BAD.

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Pruning cuts should be made AT THE POINT WHERE THE BRANCH MEETS THE TRUNK, just outside the branch collar.

The branch collar stub can be as small as 1/8-1/4-inch on small limbs, but can be several inches to as much as a foot or more wide on large limbs.

It will also be wider at the bottom of the limb than at the top.

Cuts made at the right place leave a round wound.

Improper flush cuts leave oval cuts and CAUSE DECAY AND CAVITIES that form in the trunk long term.

It's scientific fact that CUTTING INTO OR REMOVING BRANCH COLLARS CAUSE PROBLEMS LIKE DECAY AND CAVITIES.

Flush cuts encourage DECAY at the top and bottom of the cuts.

They also DESTROY the natural protective zone between the trunk and the branch and can cause several other SERIOUS TREE PROBLEMS, including CANKERS, CRACKS, DECAYED WOOD, DISCOLORED WOOD, RESIN POCKETS, SLOWED GROWTH OF NEW WOOD, SUN INJURY, and WET WOOD,

Proper cuts are round, are smaller, and will heal much faster.

Peach, plum, apricot, and other fruit trees, are particularly SENSITIVE TO FLUSH CUTS.

Many fruit tree insects and disease problems are related to improper pruning cuts.

Long branch STUBS can also be DETRIMENTAL and should be avoided.

However, it is always better to err on the side of STUBS being too long rather than too short.

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Proper pruning cut leaving
the branch collar fully intact

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Improper flush with branch collar removed is cut healing poorly

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Wound Dressings

Research by Alex Shigo, Carl Whitcomb, and the U.S. Forest Service, has shown that PRUNING PAINT AND WOUND DRESSINGS HAVE NO BENEFIT, and can be harmful by slowing the healing process.

Healthy tissue needed for callus formation can be DAMAGED or KILLED by pruning paint or dressings.

Trees have defense cells, much like white blood cells in mammals.

These lignin cells are produced on the backside of a wound to naturally prevent diseases from entering fresh cuts.

Just as a cut finger heals faster when exposed to the air, so does a tree wound.

Cavities

Cavities are often CAUSED BY FLUSH CUTS.

Cavities in trees are voids where fungi have rotted healthy material.

They are usually the result of physical injury.

Removing only the decayed material is the remedy.

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Fillers such as concrete and foam are at best cosmetic and NOT RECOMMENDED.

When removing decayed matter from cavities, be careful not to cut or punch into the living tissue.

Injuries to healthy tissue can introduce further decay into the healthy wood.

When cavities hold water, drain tubes are sometimes inserted to release water.

This procedure is a BAD IDEA.

Drain tubes puncture the protective barriers between the rotted and healthy wood and allow decay to expand.

Cabling

Weak crotches between limbs can sometimes be stopped from splitting by installing cables horizontal to the ground so the natural movement of the tree is not completely stopped.

Cabling used to hold up low growing limbs is POOR TREE CARE and A WASTE OF MONEY.

Cabling can be VERY DANGEROUS, and should only be done by professional arborists.

Again, removing half of the « V » shaped vertical growth is a BETTER WAY to prevent the splitting and have a healthier tree.

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Examples of BAD PRUNING

Many tree pruners are gutters (i.e. heavy thinning) and lifters (i.e. cutting off lower limbs).

Some home-owners are too — especially men.

It's genetic, manly stuff to cut up and hack up stuff.

Let's talk about the good, the bad, and the ugly pruning techniques.

To trim a tree properly, stand back and look at the overall form of the plant.

Do this before you make a single cut.

The overall shape and character that you see before you start is what you should still see when the pruning is finished.

Remember that **EVERY CUT HURTS THE TREE.**

Thinning (Gutting) Trees

You've heard that thinning trees is good for them, but **IT IS NOT.**

Thinning may be good for the grass and other plantings under the tree, but it is **NOT GOOD FOR THE TREE.**

Heavy thinning is called gutting and is **SEVERELY DAMAGING.**

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Cutting Off Lower Limbs (Lifting)

Cutting off lower limbs, lifting, is in the same category.

If limbs are in the way — hanging too low over the driveway or hitting you between the eyes or scraping your head when you mow the lawn, cut them off — just don't be fooled that it is good for the tree.

It is NOT.

It only benefits you.

NO PRUNING PAINT either.

Nature doesn't use it so why should we ?

Conclusion

As a final note, the tree trimmings resulting from pruning should not be hauled away.

The large pieces should be used for firewood, and the limbs and foliage should be shredded and used as mulch under trees or mixed into a compost pile.

This is also excellent mulch for walkways and in the landscape and vegetable garden.

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Too many cuts close together

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