

PROPER PRUNING PRACTICES

It is important to understand the difference of Topping versus Pruning. When a decision is made to reduce the size of an older tree, it can be topped or it can be pruned properly. Although the speed and nature of regrowth will depend on species and local factors, any comparison of irresponsible topping vs competent pruning will be dramatic.

Topped Tree




Pruned Tree



Year 1


The topped tree is an ugly stub and a remnant of a once lovely tree. If pruned properly, size is reduced but form is retained.





Year 2


Vigorous sprouts have sprung out of topped tree and are growing with abnormal rapidity. The pruned tree adds growth slowly and distributes it more normally.





Year 3

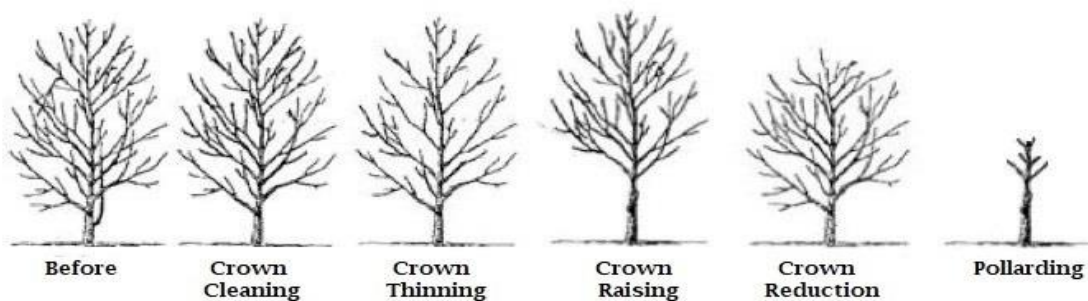
In a relatively short time, the topped tree is much taller, much bushier, and more dangerous. The properly pruned tree is safer, more beautiful and safely controlled.





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TYPES OF TREE PRUNING TECHNIQUES AS DEFINED BY THE ISA (INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF ARBORICULTURE).

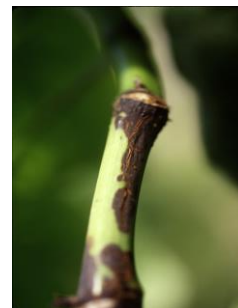




TOPPING VS. PRUNING

TOPPING CAN LEAD TO SUNBURN

Branches within a trees crown produce thousand of leaves to absorb sunlight. When the leaves are removed, the remaining branches and trunk are suddenly exposed to high levels of light and heat. The result may be sunburn of the tissues beneath the bark, which can lead to cankers, bark splitting, and death of some branches.



TOPPING CREATES HAZARDS

The survival mechanism that causes a tree to produce multiple shoots below each topping cut comes at great expense to the tree. These shoots develop from buds near the surface of the old branches. Unlike normal branches they develop in a socket of overlapping wood tissues. New shoots grow very quickly and are prone to breaking. The irony is that while the goal was to reduce the trees height to make it safer – it has been made more hazardous than before!!



TOPPING MAKES TREES UGLY

The natural branching structure of a tree is a biological wonder. Trees form a variety of shapes and growth habits, all with the same goal of presenting their leaves to the sun. Topping removes the ends of branches, often leaving ugly stubs. Topping destroys the natural form of a tree.

Without leaves (up to 6 months of the year in temperate climates) a topped tree appears disfigured and mutilated. With leaves, it is a dense ball of foliage, lacking its simple grace. A tree that has been topped can never full regain its natural form.



TOPPING IS EXPENSIVE

The cost of topping a tree is not limited to what the perpetrator is paid. If the tree survives, it will require pruning again within a few years. It will either need to be reduced again or storm damage will have to be cleaned up. If the tree dies, it will have to be removed.

Topping is a high-maintenance pruning practice, with some hidden costs. One is the reduction in property value. Healthy, well-maintained trees can add 10-20 percent of the value of a property. Disfigured, topped trees are considered an impending expense.

Another possible cost of topped trees is potential liability. Topped trees are prone to breaking and can be hazardous. Because topping is considered an unacceptable pruning practice, any damage caused by branch failure of a topped tree may lead to finding of negligence in a court of law.

