



Pruning Goals: Why to Prune

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Pruning Goals

- **Safety**– for us
 - Prevent breakage before it happens
 - Allow for traffic and pedestrian visibility
 - Manage trees around buildings and utilities
- **Strength**
 - Tree survives storms, wind, etc.
 - Resists rot
 - Long life
- **Tree health**
 - Adequate food supply: Sugars made in the leaves
 - Strong new growth
 - Air circulation discourages diseases

Training a Young Tree: Good pruning starts young

- For the first few years of its life, a tree needs us to...
 - Encourage healthy new growth
 - Grow tree up: Train it to one **central leader**
 - Remove some **low limbs**
 - Remove damaged, rubbing, crossing, and diseased limbs

This process begins in the nursery (the first 3-7+ years), and continues after planting.

Why start young?

- Uncorrected bad habits will grow up to become hazards.
- Unpruned small limbs with little problems will grow up to be large limbs with major problems... requiring big cuts— or lots of bad cuts.



Remember: Training takes years

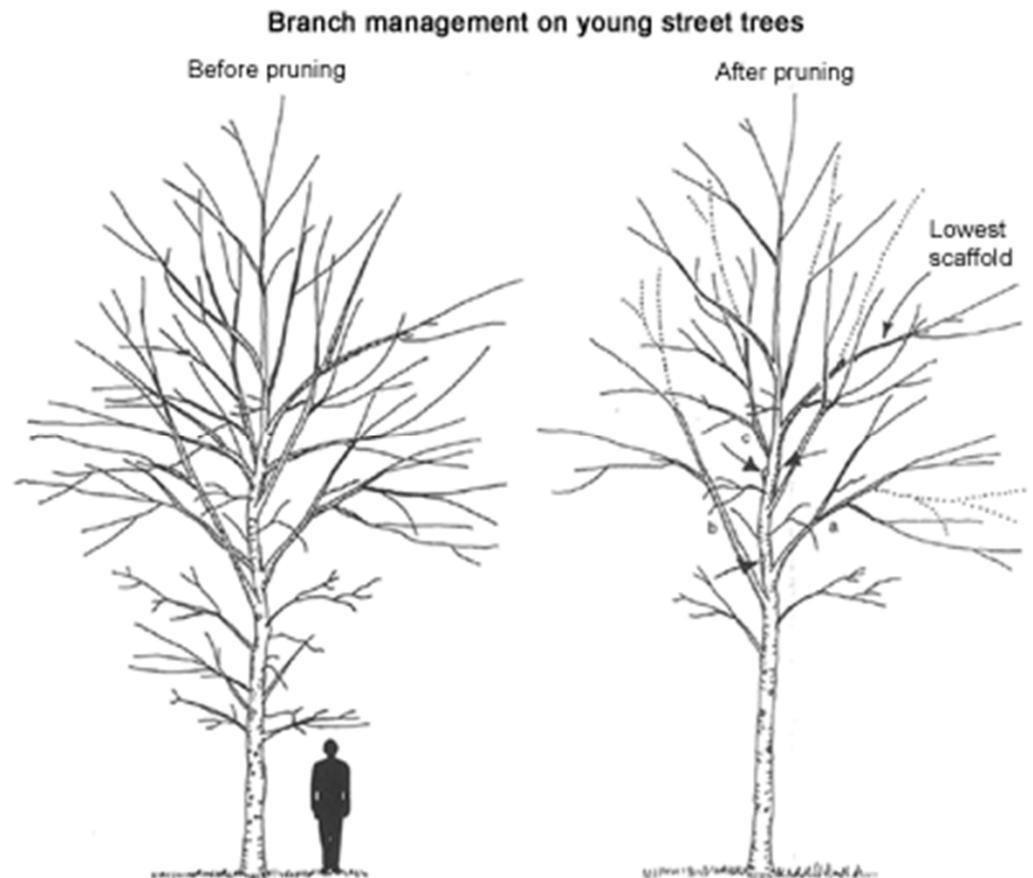


- You don't need to make a tree look perfect all at once!
- Use the **rule of 1/3**
- Remove some problem limbs every year
- Subordinate larger problem limbs, then remove later
 - Subordination slows down limb growth
 - Next year, they will be smaller caliper compared to the trunk, and you can remove them
- Three competing leaders: remove one, subordinate the other

Lower-limbing trees

Why to lower-limb a tree:

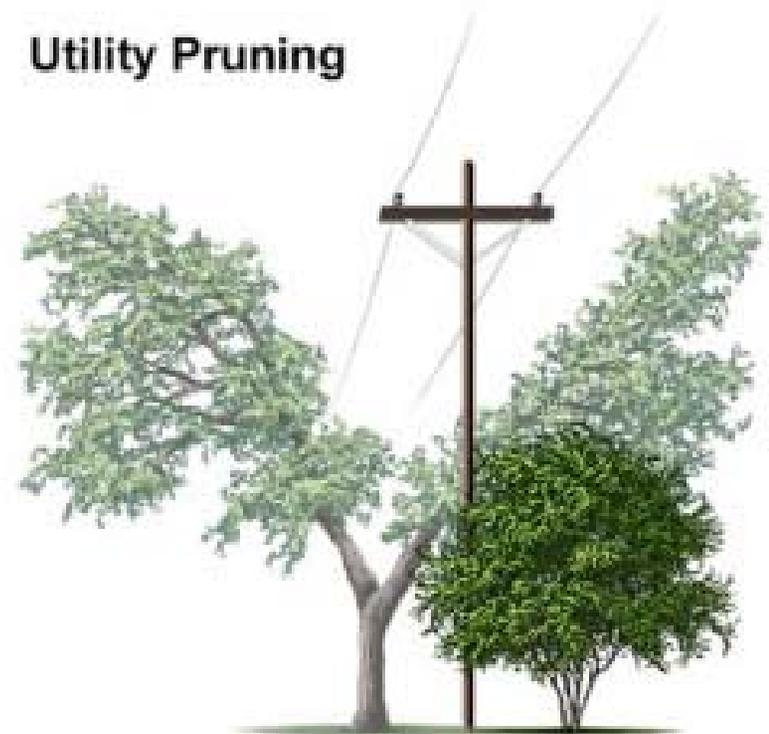
- **Safety:** Visibility and clearance for vehicles and pedestrians
- **Convenience:** Lawn mowing, parking, etc.
- **Tree health:** Removal of weak or dead limbs; allowing air circulation
- **Appearance?**
- **Landscape design:** Allowing room for other plants



Utilities and buildings

- We often prune to keep trees away from obstacles: **Utility lines** and **buildings**
- “As much as needed, as little as possible”
- May violate some rules of structural pruning, by necessity
- Must account for regrowth
- **Safety first:** If you are not trained in utility line pruning, **stay away!**
- **Better than pruning: Planting the correct tree for the space**

Utility Pruning



Right Tree Right Place

Pruning and tree health

If done correctly, **some** pruning may **sometimes** encourage tree health.

- Removal of dead and broken limbs
- Diseased material
 - Doesn't work for all diseases!
- Crisscrossing or rubbing limbs
- Competing limbs: Canopy cleaning
 - Often not as necessary as we think
 - May encourage more air flow
- Poor branch angles: Structurally unsound



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Why not to prune

A lot of pruning is unnecessary and may do more harm than good!

- **Topping** to reduce height or shape a tree
- Includes “**Crape Murder**” of crapemyrtles
- **Liontailing**: Excessive removal of lower and internal limbs
- Compulsive clearing of inner canopy
- **Multiple small cuts** rather than large, decisive cuts
 - Common in lower-limbing



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Please don't "liontail" trees...

- **Starves trunk and/or limbs:**
Not enough leaves
- Structurally **weak**
- **Slows growth**
- Sun can scald exposed trunk
- Encourages watersprouts
- Looks stupid

...and NEVER TOP A TREE!

- Starves tree: Takes away the most productive leaves
- Multiple open wounds are slow to heal; encourage rot and disease
- Does not shape the tree!
 - Suckers like crazy
 - Suckers are weakly attached to the tree and will break off
 - Soft new growth encourages disease
- Looks terrible
- Weakens and will often kill the tree



Thank you

