



What to Prune from a Tree

- A** Suckers that grow from the roots or base of the trunk
- B** Limbs that sag or grow close to the ground
- C** Branches that form an acute angle with the trunk
- D** Watersprouts that shoot up from main 'scaffold' branches
- E** Limbs that are dead, diseased or broken
- F** Branches that grow parallel to and too close to another
- G** Branches that cross or rub against others
- H** Limbs that compete with the tree's central leader

Pruning Small Flowering Trees

Avoid pruning a young or newly planted tree - it needs as many leaves as possible to produce the food required for good root growth. Remove only dead, broken, or injured branches, as well as those that cross or rub each other. And always prune back to a healthy stem or branch without leaving stubs. This eliminates hiding places or pests and diseases, and looks better. Never cut back the plant's leader - the top-most growing point of the tree - which is vital to letting the tree develop its natural form.

Once the tree is a few years old, shape it, gradually over the course of several years to maximize foliage and flowering. The tree's branches should be well-spaced up the trunk and spiraling around it. As a guideline, prune no more than one-fourth of the tree's total leaf area in a single year. To raise the tree's clearance beneath it, remove the lowest branches. Also target branches that are spaced too closely together or that join the trunk at a narrow angle - 45 degrees or less. These form weak limb attachments and will break easily in wind or under the weight of snow or ice.

When removing an entire tree branch, cut as close to the branch collar - the swollen ring of bark where the limb meets the main stem or trunk - as possible without cutting into it. When cutting branches more than 1 inch in diameter, avoid tearing or stripping bark by using a pruning saw and the three-cut method shown below. A good pruning cut will heal quickly and naturally without the use of dressings or poultices.

Remove fast-growing stems, called suckers, that grow up from the roots or the base of the trunk as they appear, as well as the extra-vigorous (and often weakly attached) shoots, called watersprouts, that grow straight up from the trunk or branches.

Mature trees require only occasional pruning to maintain their structure and appearance. Never make the mistake of cutting off the top of a tree's canopy to reduce its size. Topping typically leaves the tree much less attractive and much more prone to weak growth and pests.

Tree-cut Branch Removal

To prune a tree limb cleanly and safely, use a pruning saw and make these three sequential cuts:

- 1 On the bottom of the limb between 6 and 12 inches from the trunk; cut about one-quarter of the way through.
- 2 Through the limb from the top, starting about 1 inch beyond the first cut. (The weight of the branch may cause it to snap off before the cut is complete)
- 3 Completely through the short remaining stub from top to bottom just beyond the swollen branch collar. (Support the stub while sawing, to make a clean cut.)

