

# How to Prune Trees

Excerpts from *Bedker, Peter.J et. al. 1995. USDA Forest Service - How to Prune Trees. NA-FR-01-95* [https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/fsbdev7\\_016046.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fsbdev7_016046.pdf)

- When pruning, maintain 67% ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) of the crown. If you need to take more of the crown, consider taking the full tree (Figure 4).
- When possible, avoid pruning in the spring and early summer when the trees are actively growing, and there is a higher susceptibility to diseases and pathogens.
- When pruning, use the three step pruning technique (Figure 6c)
  - Find the branch collar then the branch bark ridge. A good pruning cut will not damage either one (Figure 6a).
  - Make a small notch (first cut) on the underside of the branch to prevent bark ripping as the branch is cut.
  - Second cut should be outside of the notch, cutting away the largest portion of the branch and leaving a small stub.
  - Final cut is placed just outside the branch bark ridge/branch collar. This will leave a wound that the tree or plant can easily heal itself with time.

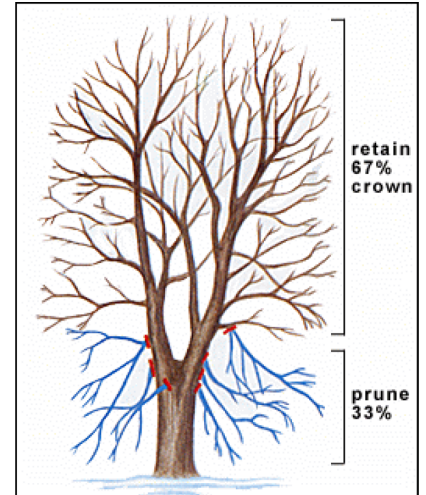


Figure 4. Crown raising - branches to be removed are shaded in blue; pruning cuts should be made where indicated with red lines. The ratio of live crown to total tree height should be at least two-thirds.

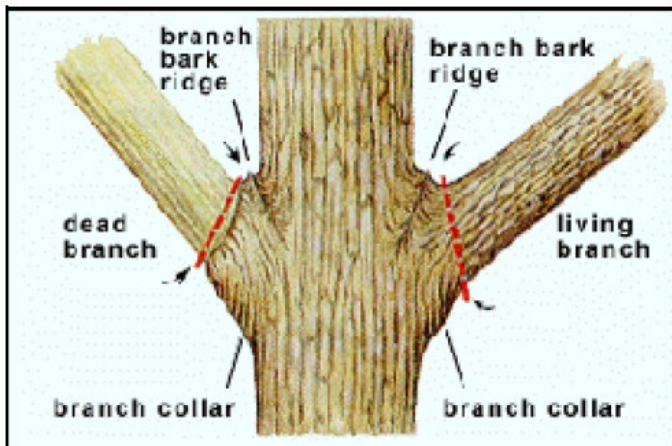


Figure 6. Pruning cuts

