

THE TEN PRUNING COMMANDMENTS

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COMMANDMENT #1: *ALWAYS have a reason to prune – If in doubt, then don't take it out!* Once cut, the branch is gone.

COMMANDMENT #2: *ALL pruning is done at a bud or branch*

COMMANDMENT #3: *Prune to Improve Structural Strength*

- Encourage the development of a large, central trunk
- Create scaffolding, i.e., well spaced lateral branches
- Eliminate co-dominant branches, and branches with crotch angles less than 60 degrees
- Encourage tapered trunks and branches

COMMANDMENT #4: *Maintain at least one-half the foliage* on branches originating on the lower two-thirds of the trunk - In other words, two-thirds of total tree height in foliage and one-third pruned.

COMMANDMENT #5: *Prune to Improve Tree Health*

- Remove 3-D branches (i.e., dead, diseased, & dying) & increase air circulation.

COMMANDMENT #6: Never remove more than 25% of the canopy during one pruning cycle.

COMMANDMENT #7: *NEVER TOP A TREE!*

Use the drop-crotch method to reduce tree height. The targeted lateral must be at least one-third the diameter of the pruned branch.

COMMANDMENT #8: Always prune a branch at the branch collar. In other words, *NEVER FLUSH CUT OR LEAVE A STUB.*

COMMANDMENT #9: Large or very long branches must be pruned using the 3-Step procedure

COMMANDMENT #10: Always disinfect pruning tools between trees to prevent the spread of disease

IMMEDIATELY PAINT PRUNING CUTS ON ALL OAKS– to prevent the spread of oak wilt disease.

When in doubt – get professional help.

On Newly Planted Trees:

Don't do any "corrective pruning" the first year. Leave the bottom branches for at least 3-4 years, to help the tree gather solar energy and reduce the wind-sail effect of top-heavy foliage (which disturbs roots).

PRUNING

Types:

Cleaning

- Dead
- Diseased
- Dying
- Broken
- Crossed/Rubbing

Raising

- Temporary branches
- 2/3 Crown : 1/3 Stem
- Vista

Thinning

- Dense crown or leader
- Never remove more than 20% at one time
- Work from outside in - Avoid lionstailing
- Reduce weight - increase light penetration - reduce breakage
- Leave 1/2 of branches on lower 2/3 of leader - increases taper

Crown Reduction

- Never top
- Use drop crotch
- Hire professional

Corrective

- Double leaders
- Narrow crotches - wider is better - included bark
- Scaffolding

Proper pruning:

3 cut method

- branch collar
- stubs
- flush cuts

1/3 rules

- cut back to 1/3 diameter of what is removed
- 2/3 crown : 1/3 stem - don't lollypop
- never remove more than 1/5 to 1/3 live material at one time

At planting

- Only cleaning if necessary
- Do not have to balance crown to root
- Leave lower branches - temporary

Pruning and oak wilt:

Paint

Try to avoid Spring

crepe myrtles