

Pruning Guide



Proper pruning is beneficial to a tree's development. This guide is intended to describe how young trees should be pruned. For mature or larger trees it is best to hire a certified arborist.

It is illegal to prune or remove a street tree without a permit. To apply for a permit, contact the City Arborist's office at (408) 794-1901 or www.sanjoseca.org/tree.

When To Prune

Prune after leaves have fallen or following the coldest part of winter, before buds open. Avoid pruning in summer and fall.

Proper Structure

Radial Spacing: No more than 3 branches attached at the same height

Branch Angles: Parallel branches should be about 30° or more apart on opposite ends of the trunk

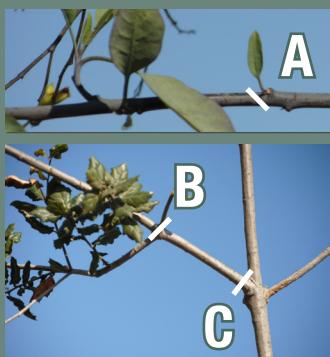
10:00 And 2:00 Positions
Are Ideal For Branches
At the Same Height



REMOVE INCLUDED BARK



Included Bark: When a branch is attached at a narrow angle to the turnk or another branch



ALWAYS PRUNE THE BRANCH BACK TO:

- A: Bud
- B: Connection With Another Branch
- C: Trunk

The Proper Cut

Cut just outside the branch collar. If done correctly, the leftover tissue will form a proper scar to prevent future disease or damage to the trunk.

PROPER PRUNER TECHNIQUE



- 1: Find A Branch You Want To Prune
- 2: Place Pruners Right Outside Branch Collar
- 3: A Correct Cut Leaves Branch Bark Ridge & Branch Collar Intact

IMPROPER CUTS

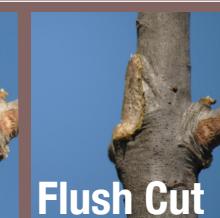
Stub Cut

Don't Leave Too Much Tissue After the Cut



Flush Cut

Don't Cut Into The Branch Collar



When a branch is too thick for pruners and requires a saw, use the Three Cut Method.

THREE CUT METHOD

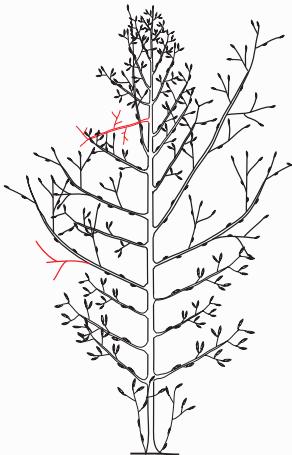
- 1: Partially Cut From Beneath
- 2: Cut Several Inches Above And Allow Limb To Fall
- 3: Cut Just Outside the Branch Collar



The Five-Step Process

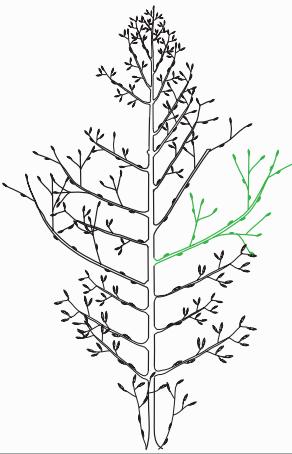
Follow these steps to give your tree its best chance at a long, well structured life with fewer issues of broken branches, rot, and obstructions. Remember, never remove more than 25% of a tree's canopy!

1) The Four D's



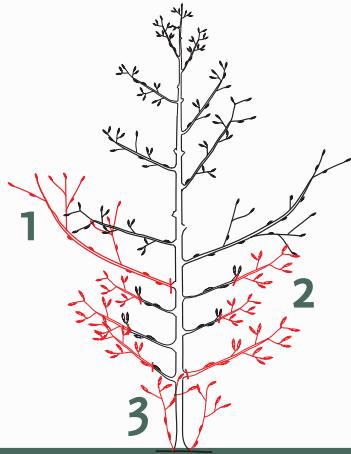
- Remove dead, dying, damaged, or diseased branches
- If unsure if the branch or tree is alive: scratch off a tiny piece of bark; if the tissue is green the branch is alive.

3) Lowest Permanent



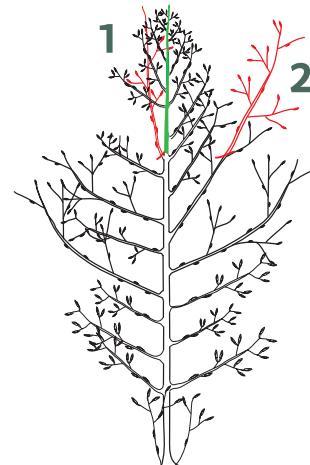
- **Lowest Permanent Branch:** Branch at the desired height for clearance
- Select the lowest permanent branch. *City guidelines:*
 - 8 ft. over sidewalks
 - 14 ft. over streets
- Its width should be no more than $\frac{1}{2}$ of the central leader's
- Choose a central leader with a good angle of attachment

5) Temp. Branches



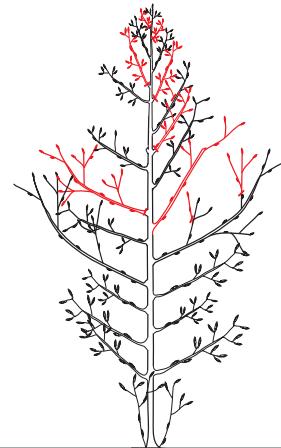
- **Temporary branches:** Branches below the lowest permanent branch that will be removed in the coming years
 1. Remove branches that are thicker than $\frac{1}{3}$ of the trunk's width
 2. Prune back smaller temporary branches to 3 or 4 buds
 3. Remove suckers from the base of the trunk

2) Central Leader



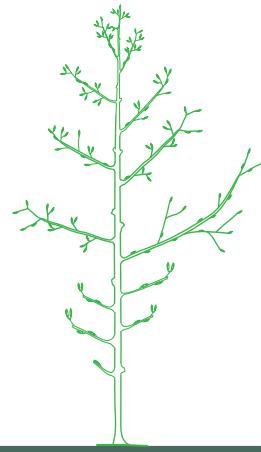
- Select a central leader- ideally the strongest, tallest, most vertical stem in line with trunk (green)
- Remove or cut back competing branches that are:
 1. Angled too sharply towards the trunk
 2. Higher and thicker than the central leader

4) Branch Spacing



- Remove branches that are too close together above the lowest permanent branch:
 - Vertical spacing between branches:
 - 18" or more for large trees
 - 12" for small trees
- **Radial spacing:** No more than 3 branches at any height
- Remove branches that cross each other or point towards trunk

Pruning Permits



- A permit is required to:
- Prune or remove a street tree (10 ft. from the curb)
 - Remove a yard tree with a diameter greater than 18"
 - Remove Heritage Trees
- Fines up to \$3,000 may apply for pruning without a permit.

Acquiring a permit is just one phone call away!
Call (408) 794-1901 or visit
www.sanjoseca.gov/tree/