



Mountain Gate is blessed with many beautiful maple street trees.

These are now 20 years old.  
Many have never been maintained.  
Some have been badly damaged

Original placements near streetlights were poorly chosen.  
Original placements close to sidewalks were poorly chosen.

It is each homeowner's responsibility to maintain these trees.  
These photos should help provide proper guidance



The top of a tree is called its crown  
Crowns this dense need pruning



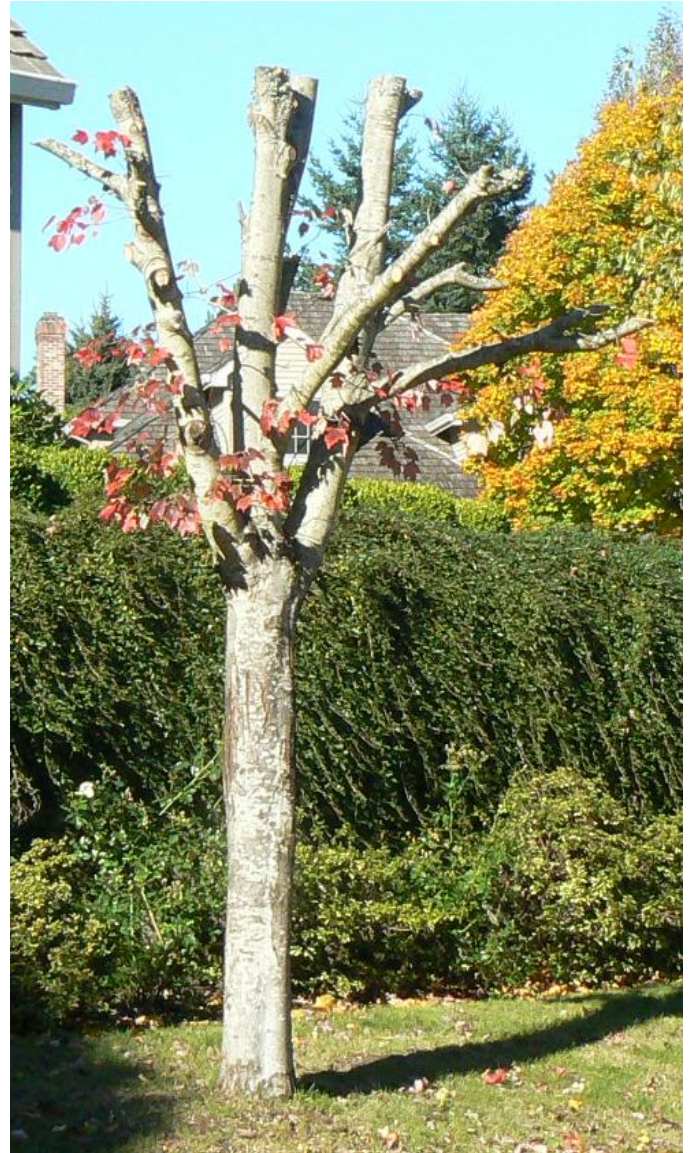
This crown is open to light and air on its interior and has less mass, yet maintains the overall size and shape of the crown



Dense crowns, especially when leafed, create more weight for the tree to hold up and require greater strength to resist winds.



The result can be wind damage causing whole sides of trees to break and peel off



Worse than no maintenance, perhaps, is bad maintenance.

The practice known as "topping" or "limbing" irrevocably damages the tree, both aesthetically and physically.



Within one growing season, a topped tree pushes out spindly shoots in an attempt to produce enough foliage to feed itself



One season after being topped,  
summer



Two seasons after being  
topped, winter

## STOP Topping Trees

Tree topping was considered for years to be the easiest and cheapest way to make mature trees safer and reduce their size. Topping is an ancient practice – some cultures topped trees to create a harvestable crop of tree branches. Whether it's because of tradition or just ignorance, millions of trees have been hacked with little or no consideration to their health and structural integrity. People who top trees have yet to recognize that following established industry standards of professionalism while pruning trees, can improve their health, growth and appearance.

### What happens when trees are topped?

Trees maintain a delicate crown-to-root ratio. Topping removes the crown, upsetting this ratio and limiting the tree's ability to sustain its own roots. This makes them more susceptible to insects and disease, and particularly decay. Limbs weakened by decay cannot handle the weight of rapid re-growth. In a few years, if the tree survives, it may become a bigger safety hazard than it was prior to topping.

### What is the alternative?

Professional arborists have the ability to make the tree look more attractive, safer, and even smaller, with appropriate corrective pruning. The principles of proper pruning are to restrict growth in one area and encourage it in others, as well as to remove damaged or dead limbs. Pruning encourages growth, improves flower and fruit production, improves plant health, repairs damage and helps add aesthetic appeal to a tree.

### Pruning at the right time

"Timing of pruning is very important to the health of your tree," says Robert Rouse, director of Accreditation for the Tree Care Industry Association. "Pruning some trees at the wrong time of the year can be detrimental to their health. On the other hand, many trees can be pruned year-round. Certain operations, such as deadwood removal, have no detrimental effect on the health of the tree no matter when they are carried out. This is so because the wood is already dead and has been walled-off from the rest of the tree by the plant's defense mechanisms," he says.

If you are unsure whether you should prune your tree or if your tree has been topped, consult a professional arborist who can offer advice or perform proper pruning. For a list of professional arborists in your area, or to get information on the care and maintenance of trees, contact the Tree Care Industry Association, 1-800-733-2622 or use a zip code search on the TCIA Web site: [www.tcia.org](http://www.tcia.org). TCIA is a 69-year-old public and professional resource on trees and arboriculture.



A topped tree is susceptible to disease and could become hazardous. The better alternative is proper pruning.



established 1938

# National Arborist Association

Dedicated to the Advancement of Commercial Tree Care Businesses

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*For immediate release*

## Topping and Lion's Tailing are Forbidden

Picture this: You visit your manicurist because your nails are too long. She agrees you have a problem and recommends you have your whole arm removed. Better yet, have both arms removed, just in case. While, technically, this solves the problem, it demands too high a price. Apparently, this "professional" isn't sufficiently knowledgeable to offer less severe, more appropriate solutions.

"Similar types of 'solutions' are sometimes misapplied to tree care problems," says Peter Gerstenberger, director of safety and education at the National Arborist Association (NAA). Based in Amherst, NH, the NAA is the national association for tree care company owners and operators. The practice known as "topping"—the lopping off of large parts of a tree—is the tree care equivalent to amputation. Trees are often topped to height or shape, leaving branch stubs and little or no foliage.

Gerstenberger points out that "Lion's-tailing" is another practice that severely damages trees. In this case the inner foliage, branches, and limbs of a tree are stripped bare. The lion-tailed tree has the unnatural form of a giant umbrella, with the remaining foliage limited to the ends of the branches! The limbs left on the tree are long and bare except for a characteristic "tuft" of foliage at the end, giving the appearance of a lion's tail.

According to Gerstenberger, consumers today are more knowledgeable and increasingly refuse to allow their trees to be topped. Unfortunately, some so-called professionals practice lion's tailing, which isn't as instantly recognized as a bad practice by consumers.

Gerstenberger notes that topping should not be confused with proper crown reduction pruning, which will safely reduce a tree's size and redirect its growth. Nor should lion's-tailing be confused with proper thinning, which is the selective removal of branches to decrease weight and wind resistance. Generally proper pruning of either type will not remove more than 25 percent of the tree's foliage.

Gerstenberger says you should not top trees because doing so:

- \* leaves large exposed wounds that the tree can't readily close.
- \* ruins tree structure
- \* removes too much foliage and disrupts the tree's energy storage for future growth.
- \* stimulates vigorous new growth, which is weakly attached and prone to breakage
- \* increases tree maintenance costs.
- \* destroys the tree's appearance and value

You should not lion's tail trees because:

- \* limbs become weak and may break
- \* increased sunlight on the interior of the tree can cause sunscald
- \* it stimulates vigorous new growth on the inner portion of the tree that is weakly attached and prone to break.
- \* it removes too much foliage disrupting the tree's energy reserve for future growth
- \* it destroys the tree's appearance and value.

Homeowners who are looking for someone to assess their landscape and make recommendations should consult a professional arborist. Contact the National Arborist Association (NAA), a 63-year-old public and professional resource on trees and arboriculture. The NAA has more than 2,800 members who recognize stringent safety and performance standards, and are required to carry liability insurance. An easy way to find a tree care service provider in your area is to use the "Locate Your Local NAA Member Companies" program. You can use this service by calling (800) 733-2622 or by doing a zip code search at [www.natlarb.com](http://www.natlarb.com).

*You can download a .pdf version of this press release at [www.natlarb.com](http://www.natlarb.com)*



## Industry Standards

*ANSI Standards for the Professional Arborist*

### ANSI A300 (Part 1) - 2008 Pruning

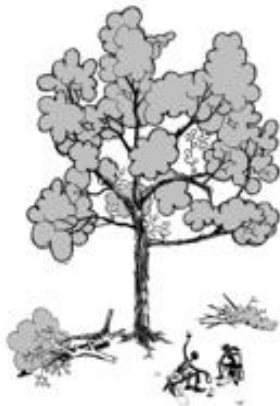
#### Buy it now

This part of the A300 standards applies to pruning and trimming operations. Part 1 *Pruning* addresses:

- Pruning practices
- Pruning objectives (includes vista/view enhancement and structural enhancement)
- Pruning methods (types)
- Palm pruning
- Utility pruning

A300 Pruning standards recognize four basic pruning methods for pruning:

- **Clean:** Selective pruning to remove one or more of the following parts: dead, diseased, and/or broken branches.



- **Reduce:** Selective pruning to decrease height and/or spread (consideration must be given to the ability of a species to tolerate reduction pruning).



- **Thin:** Selective pruning to reduce density of live



branches.

**Advisory Notice:** Topping and Lion's Tailing are not acceptable pruning practices! Over-thinning (rooster-tailing) of palms is not an acceptable pruning practice.

[Topping](#) (PDF) - the reduction of a tree's size using heading cuts that shorten limbs or branches back to a predetermined crown limit, or [Lion's Tailing](#) (PDF) - the removal of an excessive number of inner, lateral branches from parent branches – can injure trees and not considered normal pruning practices!

Learn how to understand and write A300 pruning specs!

[Download the specification writing guideline](#)

[How to write pruning specifications flow chart](#)

[Pruning specification writing guidelines and samples](#)

There is a National Standard covering the proper ways to prune trees  
It is Part 1 of ANSI A300

Although not so visually objectionable as Topping, Lion's Tailing can also damage trees



Lion's Tailed tree image taken from the internet



Lion's Tailed tree shortly after having been trimmed

PLEASE

Maintain the health of your trees, the value of your property, and the beauty of our neighborhood by:

Using ONLY tree specialist companies with an Arborist on staff

Requiring a Proposal and Contract based on ANSI A300 standards

Refusing to let your trees be Topped

Refusing to let your trees be Lion's Tailed



















