



TREE NEWS

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YOU CAN USE

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HIRING THE RIGHT TREE COMPANY PART 2: PRUNING TECHNIQUES

June's newsletter discussed how to select a qualified tree care company that meets both International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) and Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA) credentials. This month's newsletter will follow up on how to best define pruning objectives that will help you and your tree care company develop a pruning plan. Your pruning plan should consist of at least one or more of the following pruning types:

Clean: Crown cleaning consists of the selective removal of dead, diseased, and/or broken branches. Your plan should include the size the parts to be removed and the locations. For example, a written specification for crown cleaning may read like this, "Crown clean one inch and larger dead branches, remove the large three-inch broken branch over the driveway." Some arborists will also include vine removal in crown cleaning as well.

Thin: Thinning is selective pruning to reduce the density of live branches throughout the crown. This often includes identifying crossing or rubbing branches and pruning to improve the overall distribution of branches in the crown. This process require close attention so that no more than 25% of the live crown is removed.

Raise: Raising provides vertical clearance over drives, walks, and structures such as lamps and buildings. There should be a minimum clearance specified over all of the objectives. As a rule of thumb, drives should have 14-16' of vertical clearance; 8-12' for roof lines, walks, lamps, and other structures. A tree should never be raised more than 1/3 of its total height.

Reduce: Reduction is used to decrease the height and or spread of the crown by pruning back to lateral branch unions. This specialized pruning requires an understanding of the species, its growth habits, and tolerance of this type of pruning. Not to be confused with topping, reduction pruning works with the natural growth habit and structure of the tree. Once again, the overall percentage of live crown removal should not exceed 25%.

After your meeting with an arborist, you should have a clear understanding of your pruning objectives. A well worded, written plan is best. One that discusses timing, job site restrictions, and verbalizes your concerns and needs will serve you well—and communicate clearly to the crew that comes to perform the work. Happy pruning!



Large pruning cuts take longer to compartmentalize (i.e., close). The longer a pruning cut remains open, the more susceptible the tree is to wood decay and fungi.

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