

PROPER TREE PRUNING

Why Prune? Proper pruning is essential to the health and beauty of your trees. Pruning removes broken limbs, dead and or diseased wood and helps to control the shape as well as over-growth. It has been said that you can prune a tree at any time of the year, which is true. However, there are much better times of the year when pruning should be done. The much preferred time is in the autumn after the trees go dormant and until re-growth starts. Dormancy of the plants helps in reducing the stress of pruning and there also should be fewer insects that cause damage to the pruning sites. You should not prune very young, newly planted trees as it may cause loss of leaves and sun scald. At planting, remove only diseased, dead, or broken branches. Begin training a plant during the dormant season following planting. Prune to shape young trees, making certain not to cut back the leader. Remove crossing branches and any branches growing back towards the center of the tree.

The worst time to prune is just as new growth starts in the spring and summer.

When pruning trees, you need to have the proper equipment on hand. And, make sure the cutting tools are clean and sharp. A short list of tools to have on hand is:

1. Lopping shear
2. Folding saw
3. Bow saw
4. Hand pruner

These should be cleaned after each cutting in order to avoid transferring disease.

In the pruning process it is very important that the cuts be sharp and clean and that the “Collar” located at the base of the limb (at the tree trunk) should not be removed or damaged. It’s best to leave a short stub. On large limbs:

1. Make a shallow cut underneath the branch, about 4 to 5 inches from the trunk.

2. Cut the branch about 2 to 3 inches from the first cut. This will cause the weight of the unsupported branch to fall and the initial cut will prevent the bark from peeling along the side.
3. Make the final cut to remove the rest of the stub. Be careful to cut this just outside of the branch collar where the branch and trunk are joined together. Try not to damage the "Collar".

This simple 3-step process will keep large limbs from breaking loose and tearing off bark, leaving a bad wound on the stub.

For very large trees, you may need to call an Arborist due to the type of equipment and the possible danger involved in this procedure.

More detailed information is available on our web site @ tulsamastergardeners.org. Click on "LAWN & GARDEN", then "TREES & SHRUBS".

Another resource is [OSU Fact Sheet HLA-6409](#). Or, you may visit in person with a Tulsa Master Gardener at our Master Gardener Office located within the Tulsa Extension Office at 4116 East 15th Street. Hours are from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday or phone 918-746-3701.