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Quick Facts

- Landscape trees need pruning in their early years to develop a strong structure.
- Poor pruning damages a tree for life.
- **Topping** and **shearing** are injurious to trees and shrubs and can cause them to die prematurely.

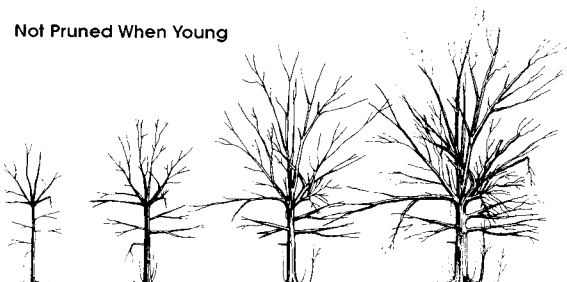
A tree in the forest differs greatly from the tree you select as a specimen for your yard. Nature has no reason to grow trees that fit our expectations for safety, appearance and longevity. A well-formed tree does not happen by accident. Trees selected for use in the landscape need guided care to grow into healthy, attractive and safe specimens.

With early structural pruning, a young tree will develop a strong trunk and sturdy, well-spaced branches. Little corrective pruning will be necessary when the tree matures.

Good pruning techniques maintain the natural form of the tree while removing crossing and rubbing branches, which cause the tree to injure itself. Weakly attached branches are removed long before they become hazards in a mature tree.

Waiting to prune a tree when it is mature can create the need for large cuts that the tree cannot easily close. Small cuts do less damage to the tree than large cuts.

Not Pruned When Young



Pruning Young Shade Trees

How a pruning cut is made determines the difference between good and bad pruning. Bad pruning cuts can cause damage that lasts for the life of the tree. Tree wounds such as “frost cracks” are not really caused by freezing; the cracks get started with improper pruning cuts or other wounds when the tree is young.

Every tree branch has a built-in protective zone of tissue at its base, called a branch collar. Inside the branch collar, the tree builds walls around the wound made in pruning. These walls limit the spread of decay in the tree. Pruning cuts made at the branch collar minimize the damage done to the tree. Improper cuts that remove or damage the branch collar allow decay to advance in the tree.

Newly Planted Trees

The belief that trees should be pruned when planted to compensate for root loss is well intended but biologically flawed.

Unpruned trees establish faster and develop a stronger root system than trees pruned at the time of planting. Trees need their leaves and shoot tips to provide food and the substances which stimulate new root production.

It is risky to prune trees at the time of planting, except to remove dead and broken branches. Other pruning on a recently planted tree should wait until the second or third year after planting. The best way to maintain the quality of your landscape investment is to use pruning practices that enhance the natural beauty and vigor of your trees and shrubs.

Pruned When Young

