

Structural Pruning



Structural Pruning Enhances Tree Strength and Longevity

In landscape settings, trees often develop multiple trunks (called leaders) in response to abundant light. The growth of multiple trunks or leaders can shorten the life span of landscape trees due to weak structure and limb breakage.

Structural pruning should be performed regularly for new trees in the landscape, as well as for trees that have been established for a period of time. Pruning newer trees can guide growth into a single leader with strong branch structure. It may be too late to achieve this goal in trees that have already developed their main branches, but it is not too late for them to benefit from the right pruning. Proper pruning can still make a difference in reducing the risk of branch failure due to structural defects.

How Structural Pruning is Done

Arborists at Rainbow Treecare are trained to assess tree structure, make proper cuts to guide your tree to grow stronger, and improve the prospects of the tree for a long and healthy life.

Reduction Cuts are used to shorten branches back to secondary limbs and can be used in two ways in structural pruning.

1. **Subordination pruning** aims to reduce the length of a tree trunk if there are two or more in competition for the top spot in a tree. This can help in the process of developing a single dominant leader to improve tree structure.

2. **Suppression pruning** is applied to trees that have already developed their main branching structure and are past the point of establishing a single leader. Reduction cuts are used to slow the growth of selected branches. These limbs may be designated as temporary limbs if they will stay in the tree for a limited time, or as scaffold limbs if they will remain as permanent parts of the tree structure.

What to Expect

Some holes or gaps may occur in the shape of a tree immediately following structural pruning. This is normal and temporary. The focus is on long-term structure, not on immediate aesthetics. Young trees will grow quickly to fill these gaps within a season or two following the pruning work. Similar pruning will be needed again in 1-3 years, depending on tree species and response. With structural pruning, a small effort makes a big difference in the long term prospects for the life of a tree.



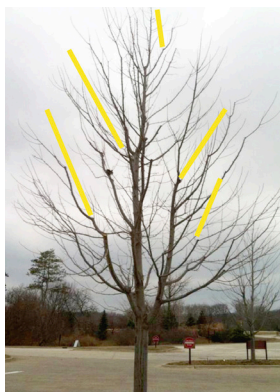
Good structure.



Weak structure due to multiple leads.



Major damage resulting from poor tree structure.



Subordination pruning.



Suppression pruning.