

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 pruning trees, following established industry standards of professionalism, 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 be 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, staff arborist for the National Arborist 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 dead wood 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 mechanism," 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. Contact the licensed tree experts at Pardoe's Lawn and Tree Service at 800-427-4890.

