

PRUNING MATURE TREES

Crown Cleaning

Crown Cleaning is the removal of dead, dying, diseased, crowded, weakly attached, low-vigor branches and watersprouts from a tree's crown.

Crown Thinning

Crown Thinning is the selective removal of branches to increased light penetration and air movement through the crown. Increased light and air stimulates and maintains interior foliage, which in turn improves branch taper and strength. Thinning reduces the wind-sail effect of the crown and the weight of heavy limbs. Thinning the crown can emphasize the structural beauty of trunk and branches as well as improve the growth of plants beneath the tree by increasing light penetration. When thinning the crown of a mature tree, seldom should more than one-third of the live foliage be removed. At least one-half of the foliage should be on branches that arise in the lower two-thirds of the tree. Likewise, when thinning laterals from a limb, an effort should be made to retain inner lateral branches and leave the same distribution of foliage along the branch. Trees and branches so pruned will have stress more evenly distributed throughout the tree or along a branch.

Crown Raising

Crown Raising removes the lower branches of a tree in order to provide clearance for buildings, vehicles, pedestrians and vistas. It is important that a tree have at least one-half of its foliage on branches that originate in the lower two-thirds of the crown to ensure a well-formed, tapered structure and to uniformly distribute stress within a tree. When pruning for a view, it is preferable to develop "windows" through the foliage of the tree, rather than to severely raise or reduce the crown.

Crown Reduction

Crown Reduction is used to reduce height and/or spread of a tree. Thinning cuts are most effective in maintaining the structural integrity and natural form of a tree and in delaying the time when it will need to be pruned again. The lateral to which a branch of trunk is cut should be at least one-half the diameter of the cut being made.

Crown Restoration

Crown Restoration can improve the structure and appearance of trees that have been topped or severely pruned using heading cuts. One to three sprouts on main branch stubs should be selected to reform a more natural appearing crown. Selected vigorous sprouts may need to be thinning to a lateral, or even headed, to control length growth in order to ensure adequate attachment for the size of the sprout. Restoration may require several prunings over a number of years.

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