Pruning Ornamental Trees

J.Robbins 2002
Reasons for Pruning
Reasons for Pruning

Have one!
Is this how you want to be known in the neighborhood?
Reasons for Pruning:

1. Remove dead wood
2. Remove diseased wood
3. Eliminate structural problems (e.g. crossing branches, tight crotches in trees)
4. Eliminate hazards (e.g. pedestrian conflicts)
5. Increase light levels in interior
6. Reduce plant size
7. Aesthetics
Reasons for Pruning:

Tight ‘V’ crotches in trees
Reasons for Pruning:

Backcrossing limb
Reasons for Pruning:

Rubbing branches
Reasons for Pruning:

Co-dominant leader

Common in opposite leaved trees like maple & ash
Problem with co-dominant leader

Buildup of non-structural bark between tight ‘V’ crotch
Pruning Trees
**Time of year to prune trees**

1. In general, just before rapid growth in early spring (tree dormant). Easy to see structure, less weight w/out leaves, and past season with ice/snow damage.

2. ANYTIME for diseased/dead wood
Pruning Techniques

1. Crown thinning
2. Pollarding
3. Topping or heading back
Crown thinning

Before

After
Crown thinning can be used to reduce the overall size of a tree and yet maintain the overall natural shape of the tree.
Crown thinning involves selectively removing the entire branch back to the point of attachment. (This may be back to a lateral branch or to the main trunk.)
Crown thinning
Topping, in contrast to thinning, is an arbitrary cutting back of tree limbs with no regard for position relative to the branch origin. (basically a hair-cut)
Pollarding
How to recognize where to prune?
Appreciate that the connection between a branch and the main trunk/branch is rather complex and that our goal is to remove the branch with minimal impact on the main trunk/branch.
Trunk/branch with bark removed.
Trunk

Transition region between trunk and branch called the branch collar
The ideal cut is just beyond the branch collar
In a few cases the tree actually tells us where to make the correct pruning cut (as though it came with its own dotted cutting line), however, in the majority of cases we make an educated guess where the proper pruning cut should be made.
Oops, where is the collar?
Branch bark ridge

Pruning cut
Probably cut too close on the bottom
Avoid leaving stubs

watersprouts
A stub is essentially a foreign object that the trunk needs to deal with.
Proper pruning cuts can be identified later by uniform, healthy wound closure.
The process of successfully removing a large branch from a tree involves 3 pruning cuts.
Cut #1:

8-12” from the main trunk and starting from the bottom, cutting upwards
Cut #2:

1” further out on the limb and starting from the top, cutting down
After first 2 cuts, left with a short piece that is easier to handle.
Cut #3:
Professional pruner
Better luck with your day job!
How to prune a young tree?
General rule of thumb: don’t remove more than 1/3 of the lower branches
Treating pruning cuts
(except for roses, do not use any pruning paints or sealers)
Don’t worry about the loss of sap from ‘bleeders’ such as maples, birch, yellowwood.
Pruning Tools

Lopper

Hand shear

Folding saw
Saws, saws, & more saws

Pruning saws come in a range of sizes, with different options for blades and handles.

Bow saws

Bow saws in 30" (above) and 21" (below) lengths.

A coarse-toothed, curved, long-bladed saw with a "D" handle for heavy work (24 in.)

A double-sided saw (16 in.)

A curved Swedish saw with a pistol grip handle and an Orsa blade (15 in.)

A Japanese-style blade on a fixed, banana-shaped handle (15 in.)

Two Japanese-style saws with folding handles (8 in., above, and 5 in., below), the blades held open with wire balls.
Cool Season Turf

Plate 3. Vegetative characteristics of five cool-season grasses viewed at the same magnification. A. Kentucky bluegrass. B. Annual bluegrass. C. Perennial ryegrass. D. Red fescue. E. Creeping bentgrass. [See Table 1 for descriptions of characteristics; photos: USDA.]
Plate 4. Vegetative characteristics of five warm-season grasses viewed at the same magnification. A. Bermudagrass. B. Zoysiagrass. C. Centipedegrass. D. St. Augustinegrass. E. Bahiagrass. (See Table 1 for descriptions of characteristics; photos: xxsx.)
Daylily Rust

The following information is being provided as a disease update in case this problem should appear in your county.

In mid-August, a new rust disease was confirmed on daylilies (Hemerocallis) growing in Arkansas. To date, the rust has been reported in 24 states and is currently confined to wiped with an ordinary white facial tissue. An orange-yellow stain on the tissue will result if the rust is present on the leaves.

Daylily rust can be easily confused with other leaf problems such as insect damage (e.g., mites) and leaf streak disease, which is caused by another fungus. Spots associated with

Stephen Vann
Extension Plant Pathologist

James Robbins
Extension Specialist - Ornamental Horticulture.