



established 1938

# National Arborist Association

Dedicated to the Advancement of Commercial Tree Care Businesses

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*For immediate release*

## Make Proper Pruning Cuts

Making proper pruning cuts helps trees protect themselves from dangerous diseases and wood decays. These diseases and wood decays can lead to the premature death of the tree and are able to attack a tree much more easily when improper pruning cuts are made.

### What are proper pruning cuts?

A proper pruning cut is called a collar cut. The arborist cuts just outside of, but as close as possible to, the branch collar. The collar is a swollen region at the union of a branch and stem that has a natural protective zone. When it is not injured, the collar will protect the tree from disease invasion and will also help cover the pruning cut quickly with new tissue.

Sometimes the collar is not visible. When this is the case, the arborist estimates the approximate location of the collar before making the final cut.

Stub cuts are pruning cuts made too far outside of the branch collar. Disease organisms "incubate" on the dying stub that remains. Eventually the stub becomes a pathway for decay organisms to enter the tree trunk and cause serious wood decay.

Heading cuts are pruning cuts that shorten a branch or stem so far back that a large stub is created. In this case, the stub decays, creating health problems for the tree.

Flush cuts are cuts that are made right up against the trunk or branch. In this case, the protective collar is removed, opening up the wood beneath to disease and wood decay infections.

**Hire a Tree Care Professional:** The best advice is to hire a tree care professional with the experience, expertise and equipment to safely take down or prune damaged trees. Require proof of liability insurance and check to see if the cost of the work is covered by your insurance company. For a list of professional arborists in your area, contact the National Arborist Association, 1-800-733-2622 or by a zip code search on the NAA's Web site: [www.natlarb.com](http://www.natlarb.com). The NAA is a 63-year-old public and professional resource on trees and arboriculture. Its more than 2,800 members all recognize stringent safety and performance standards, and are required to carry liability insurance.



**New and old collar cuts.** Note how new wood has covered cuts and decay is minimal.

**Old stub cuts.** Note how decay spreads from dead stub into trunk, creating a cavity.

**Recent flush cut.** Note rapid growth of decay up and down the trunk.

**Tree on left has been pruned properly and is healthy. Tree on right has been stub cut and flush cut, wood decay may kill this tree.**

If you would like digital photos and/or diagrams, please contact [Garvin@natlarb.com](mailto:Garvin@natlarb.com)