



established 1938

National Arborist Association

Dedicated to the Advancement of Commercial Tree Care Businesses

3 Perimeter Road, Unit 1
Manchester, NH 03103

Tel: (603) 314-5380
1-800-733-2622
Fax: (603) 314-5386

E-mail: Naa@natlarb.com
Web site: www.natlarb.com

Contact: Robert Rouse, Staff Arborist
E-Mail: Rouse@natlarb.com

For immediate release

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 following established industry standards of professionalism while pruning trees, 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 become 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 deadwood 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 mechanisms," 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. For a list of professional arborists in your area, or to get information on the care and maintenance of trees, contact the National Arborist Association, 1-800-733-2622 or use a zip code search on the NAA's Web site: www.natlarb.com. The NAA is a 63-year-old public and professional resource on trees and arboriculture.



A topped tree is susceptible to disease and could become hazardous. The better alternative is proper pruning.