



TREE CARE INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
ESTABLISHED 1938

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For immediate release

Tree Pruning to ANSI Standards

You and your landscape trees have made it through another season – drought, insects, or early leaf drop might have been the battles you had to fight for months ... at least as far as your trees are concerned. You may think that because the now dormant, leafless trees have made it this far into the calendar, you can now breathe easy. Think again! With winter storms approaching, hazards in trees should be removed now – before they damage property or the tree.

Winter is a great time to examine the stability and health of your trees, say tree care experts. Why? With the leaves off, cracks, defects and deadwood are easier to see.

“Most trees can be pruned year-round, if pruned properly,” says Tchukki Andersen, BCMA, CTSP* and staff arborist for the Tree Care Industry Association. “And certain operations are easier to do in the winter, if the ground is frozen or the tree is not actively growing.”

Some homeowners worry that arborists will not be able to determine deadwood on a tree when the leaves are off. “On the contrary,” says Andersen. “This is the best time for an arborist to locate deadwood by looking for changes in branch color, fungus growth, cracks, and other symptoms that can help them make this determination. Since the leaves are off, the view of the entire tree’s architecture is clear and a thorough check can be performed.”

Pruning is much more than the simple act of sawing off limbs. Proper pruning is an art based on scientific principles of plant physiology. At its most basic level, pruning trees involves removing damaged, dead or structurally weak limbs, which will improve a tree’s health and reduce the chances of personal or property damage caused by falling limbs. More advanced pruning methods aid in improving the tree’s structure and long-term health.

Proper pruning encourages growth, increases flower and fruit production, improves plant health, and removes damaged limbs, all which give aesthetic appeal to a tree. Pruning at the right time and in the right way is critical, since it is possible to kill a tree through neglect or over-pruning.

How can a homeowner know if an arborist will prune a tree correctly?

“Ask the arborist if they prune according to the American National Standards Institute standard for tree pruning, which is called ANSI A300,” says Andersen.

This standard recommends, and in some cases requires, that the use of certain tools, cutting techniques and pruning methods be followed, and sets the standard definitions for terms the arborist will use in your estimate. Properly written work estimates for tree pruning should be written in accordance with ANSI A300 standards.

In addition to the information given on the work estimate, ANSI A300 sets some guidelines for basic pruning practices that arborists should follow.

Arborists adhering to the ANSI A300 pruning standard will:

- not leave branch stubs
- make few or no heading cuts
- not cut off the branch collar (not make a flush cut)
- not top or lion’s tail trees (stripping a branch from the inside leaving foliage just at the ends)
- not remove more than 25 percent of the foliage of a single branch

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Editors: If you would like additional information or digital photos, please contact atetreault@tcia.org

*TCIA arborists, safety and business professionals are also available as sources for tree related articles and issues:
1-800-733-2622 or tandersen@tcia.org.*

- not remove more than 25 percent of the total tree foliage in a single year
- not damage other parts of the tree during pruning
- not use wound paint
- not prune without a good reason
- not climb the tree with climbing spikes

Find a professional

A professional arborist can assess your landscape and work with you to determine the best trees and shrubs to plant for your existing landscape. Contact the Tree Care Industry Association, a public and professional resource on trees and arboriculture since 1938. It has more than 2,000 member companies who recognize stringent safety and performance standards and who are required to carry liability insurance. TCIA has the nation's only Accreditation program that helps consumers find tree care companies that have been inspected and accredited based on: adherence to industry standards for quality and safety; maintenance of trained, professional staff; and dedication to ethics and quality in business practices. An easy way to find a tree care service provider in your area is to use the "Locate Your Local TCIA Member Companies" program. You can use this service by calling 1-800-733-2622 or by doing a ZIP Code search on www.treecaretips.org.

*Board Certified Master Arborist, Certified Treecare Safety Professional