



## Proper Pruning Of Trees

Proper pruning improves the health and appearance of trees and prolongs their useful life by removing undesirable branches which are dead, weakened, diseased, or insect-infested.

**TYPES OF PRUNING:** The National Arborist Association recognizes four classes of pruning which define the type and degree of recommended pruning.

**Class I - Fine Pruning** is the thorough removal of undesirable branches over 1/2" in diameter. This includes selective thinning to lessen wind resistance (*see drawings*).

**Class II - Standard Pruning** is the removal of undesirable branches over 1" in diameter.

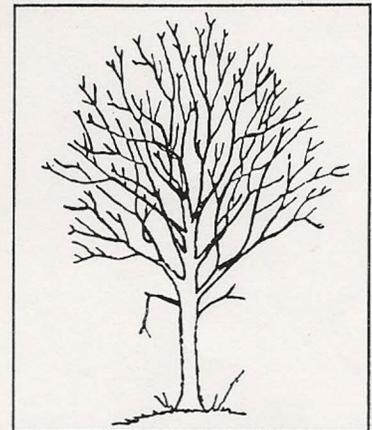
**Class III - Hazard Pruning** is the removal of undesirable branches over 2" in diameter. This class is recommended where safety considerations are paramount.

**Class IV - Crown Reduction Pruning** is the reduction in the size of the tree canopy.

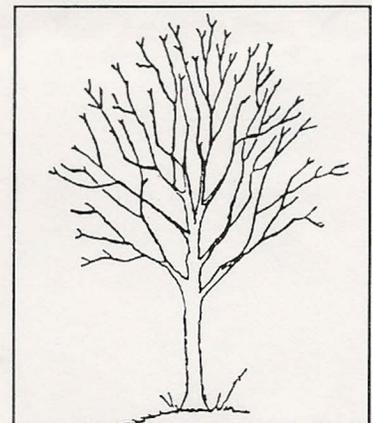
**TOPPING vs. THINNING:** Proper pruning is not to be confused with the disfiguring practice of topping. Topping is the indiscriminate removal of a tree's main leader and branches resulting in stubs. The cut surfaces of the stubs do not close readily, and internal decay develops. The resulting flush of multiple watersprouts from the stubbed branches form terminals that are very weak. Topping leaves a tree highly susceptible to damage from strong winds, winter injury, insects, and diseases.

Thinning is the correct method for removal of branches to their point of attachment to the trunk or another branch. This method eliminates unhealthy and unsightly stubs, resulting in an open, airy, natural appearance to trees. Thinning requires more skill and time to perform than does topping. Trees that are properly pruned and thinned will live longer and should not need to be pruned as often as trees that have been topped.

**WHEN TO PRUNE:** Maintenance pruning of most shade trees can be done anytime. Severe pruning, however, should be done in late winter or early spring before new growth begins. Pruning of "bleeders", that is, trees like birch and maple which seep profusely from cut surfaces in the spring, is sometimes delayed until the fall, although the loss of sap is seldom injurious unless the cuts are large. Pruning of trees susceptible to certain vascular diseases, like American elm and red oak, should be avoided during the activity period of beetles which spread the diseases.



BEFORE PRUNING



CLASS I - FINE PRUNING