

# What are the basic pruning cuts?

for shrubs & trees



## Why we prune?

- plant health
- fruit production & accessibility
- shaping young plants for health & function
- aesthetics
- safety
- control size

**“Prune to natural form so your work becomes invisible.”**

**Pruning is wounding** and, unlike animal wounds, the damage done cannot be reversed or “healed” by the replacement of the injured tissue. Trees simply wall off decay, controlling its spread long enough so that new wood added to the outside of the tree can take over the functions of the wood rotted away. **Pruning wounds don’t HEAL, they SEAL.**

## A TYPES OF CUTS

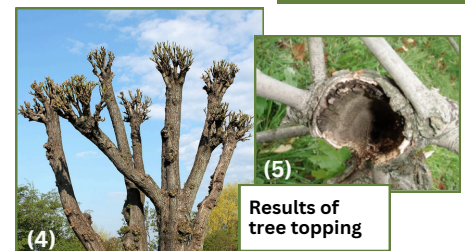
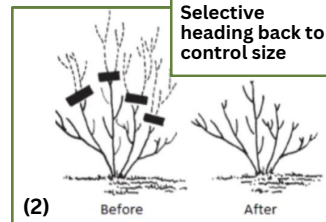
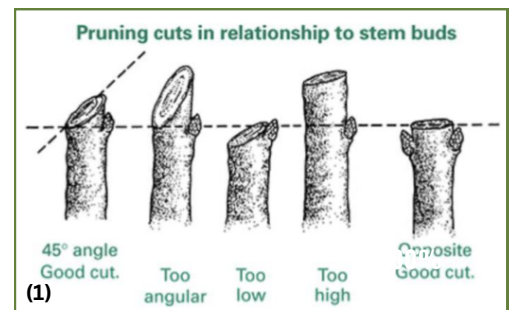
**1. HEADING CUT** - shorten trunks, branches, or twigs by heading back, tipping, topping or shearing, usually causing an explosion of growth in the remaining branch

### a. SELECTIVE - choosing particular branches to individually cut

- **Heading back** - to control size (think hydrangeas and roses)
- **Tipping** - pinching out the growing tip to encourage bushy growth (think chrysanthemums for more blooms or pepper plants for more peppers)

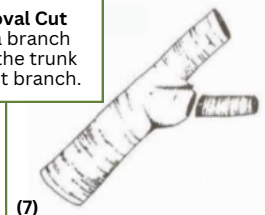
### b. NONSELECTIVE - just whacking back to no place in particular

- **Topping** - ruins the natural form of the plant, opens the main trunk to rot, disease, and eventual death. Just say no!
- **Shearing** - suitable for hedges and some small shrubs (think heather or lavender). When done on most trees and shrubs, growth habit changes to many thin branches with many small leaves, resulting in the lollipop look.



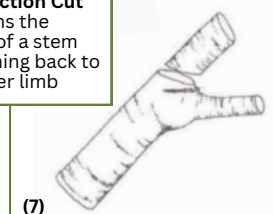
**2. BRANCH REMOVAL CUT** - removes a branch or twig completely back to its point of attachment to a larger branch or the trunk. Maintains the natural form and growth habit of the plant.

**Removal Cut**  
Prunes a branch back to the trunk or parent branch.



**3. REDUCTION CUT** - removes a section from the end of a branch, leaving a smaller branch behind. Used to control size and/or redirect growth, usually up and out.

**Reduction Cut**  
Shortens the length of a stem by pruning back to a smaller limb



## B HOW TO MAKE A PROPER BRANCH REMOVAL CUT

### 1. WHAT DO I LOOK FOR?

**BRANCH COLLAR ...** is a ring of wrinkly tissue around the base of a branch where it attaches to a bigger branch or the trunk.

**BRANCH BARK RIDGE ...** is the place where the branch bark and trunk bark meet.



### 2. WHERE SHOULD I CUT?

Cut close to and parallel to the **BRANCH COLLAR**. see **RED** Line

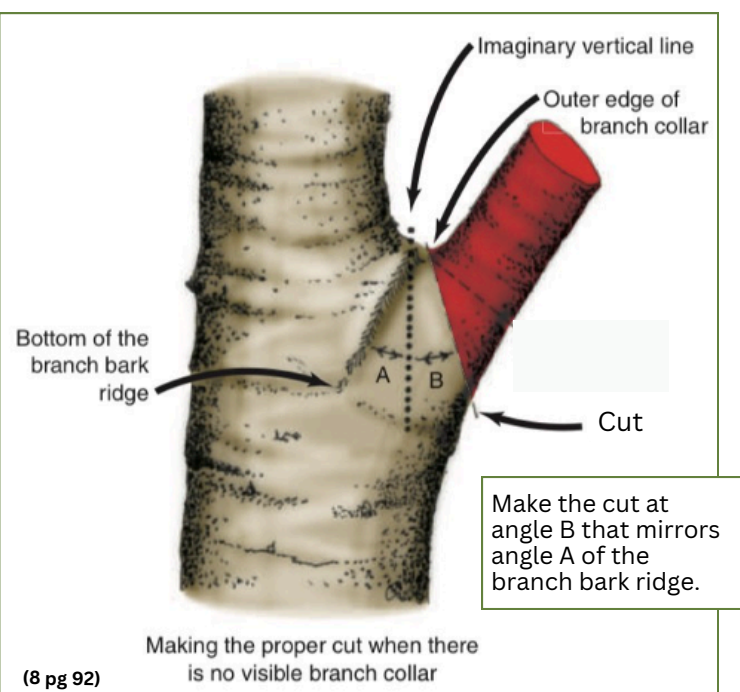
#### DO NOT CUT INTO THE BRANCH COLLAR!

The branch collar tissue closes the pruning wound to prevent infection and decay.

#### DO NOT LEAVE A STUB!

It will prevent the branch collar from closing the wound.

### 3. WHAT IF THE BRANCH COLLAR IS NOT OBVIOUS?



### 4. WHAT HAPPENS IF THE CUT IS NOT CORRECT?



Both a damaged branch collar and a stub left behind will prevent the pruning wound from sealing.

Wounds, even from proper cuts, take time to seal.



Proper cut = a wound fully sealed!

## RESOURCES

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The heartwood of a tree was originally living, water-conducting tissue whose cells are now plugged with chemical substances and cellular debris. Even though its cells are dead, its important new function is to support the tree.