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WHAT'S PROPER PRUNING? WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT IT?

Trees that grow where people live are the same trees that grow "in the wild". Trees have been on planet Earth for millions of years and will be here millions of years after humans are gone. They take good care of themselves. So, what's the difference? Well, an example: it takes years, some times a decade, for a "wild" tree to shed it's dead branches. Trees that live with humans need to have it's dead branches removed for safety.

Common reasons for pruning are to remove dead branches, to improve form, to improve fruiting and to reduce risk - correction or prevention measures. We also prune for improved light - be it for a fruit tree or for your living room, to increase air flow or to share it's space with other living green things.

There is a specific way to remove branches that causes the least amount of stress to the tree. Why should we care about this stress? Because the longer it takes a tree to heal it's wounds increases the chances of it getting sick. How does an Arborist reduce pruning stress? It's by proper pruning methods invented by Dr. Shigo, who is the world leading scientist that studied tree biology and figured out how they work.

Proper pruning, with an understanding of tree biology, can maintain good tree health and structure while enhancing the aesthetic and economic values of our landscape. What exactly does that mean? It means pruning a tree for what it needs while keeping in mind how it will respond to the trimming.

What is this specific way of pruning? ISA Certified Arborists are trained for tree biology in depth. We know where to place the pruning cut, what kind of angle is needed and what branches need to come off. Arborists do not randomly cut wherever and whatever, it's planned and very thought out. When proper pruning cuts are made, the tree can take care of itself in the best manner possible by compartementalizing. If a pruning cut is made, that is not best for the tree, it can take the tree several years to recover from it, which allows pathogens and insects into the heartwood causing decay. We don't want this, we want our trees to be strong, healthy, look good and live as long as possible. If you want to prune your trees yourself hire a Certified Arborist for a lesson. It will save your tree much stress.

Why should I care about proper pruning? My tree grows like a bad weed when I cut it, seems fine. You should care because the reason it's growing like a bad weed is the improper pruning. Over pruning (cutting off too many or all of it's leaves) a tree causes it to "panic" in a sense. It uses it's reserve stored energy, that was for dormancy, to do a massive growth so it can make leaves and make it's dinner (photosynthesize). This growth is called Epicormic and forever changes the health and life span of the tree. Read my report on why topping cuts hurt trees. When a branch is cut off improperly it also creates a negative response in either growth (sprouting many shoots out the stub) or by dying the part that was left (which allows pathogens and insects in). Timing of pruning can also be a factor. For example, people don't know how a tree works and trim them whenever they feel like.

But did you know that if your tree needs a lot of work or you would like it reduced that the worst time to do that is in the spring? In the spring, trees use their stored energy to come out of dormancy and make leaves as fast as possible. It's a great strain on a tree. So, if you reduce a tree, at that time, you have basically just wrote it's death certificate. It may come back, but there will be a lot of die back in the new shoots and your tree will never be the same. Height reducing should be done in the late fall after the tree has gone dormant. Unless there is health and safety problems that need to be mitigated. OR, trimming like just snipping off what it touching your head causes sprouting, making the area thick which causes more weight, equals breakage. An Arborist knows how to trim so that your tree is the shape you like it, is out of your way, produces excellent fruit and is safe, etc. without making the response growth worse.

