



BRANCHES TREE CARE LTD.

DIANNE HUTTON PR5142A

780-721-9161

branchestreecare@gmail.com

WHY TOPPING TREES HURTS TREES

Topping cuts is perhaps the most harmful tree pruning practise known. Yet, despite more than 25 years of literature and seminars explaining its harmful effects, topping remains a common practice.

WHAT IS TOPPING?

Topping is used to reduce the length of a tree branch. The cut is made wherever, it leaves a stub of however long.

WHY IS THIS BAD?

1. Topping stresses trees, it uses leaves to make food.
2. Topping reduces the life span of the tree 50% every time it's done.
3. Topping leads to decay, it allows pathogens and insects access to the sapwood.
4. Topping leads to risks, the response growth is weak and leads to future failure.
5. Topping makes trees ugly, response growth is thick and weak.
6. Topping is expensive.
7. Topping can cause sunburn.
8. Topping removes most or all of the trees leaves which are required for photosynthesis.
9. If the tree lives, it will just grow it all back, repeating the cycle but the new growth is not proper

Removing more than 30% of a trees canopy in one growing season causes a lot of health problems for trees. Yes, more than often, the tree will sprout and regrow the canopy. The problem though is the response growth is a "panic" type growth the tree does to save itself. Trees make their food using leaves and the sun. If all the leaves are cut off then how is the tree supposed to make it's food? Usually what happens is the tree sprouts itself into a god awful mess to not die. It uses it's stored energy to panic sprout shoots and make leaves asap. The sprouts are not proper branches. They are secondary dormant buds lying under the bark for emergencies. The bud's attachments are sitting in a bowl type situation, the wood fibers are not together like a normally grown branch. They are very weakly attached to the tree, break extremely easy and many of them often die. Usually the sprouting is like a bush that grows out the end of the topped branch. This causes sunlight to be choked out so a percentage of the sprouts don't live and because they are so weakly attached the wind breaks them easily. Because these sprouts are not properly attached to the tree it makes the tree dangerous. **It creates what people are trying to avoid.** A tree is it's strongest when it's allowed to be itself according to it's genetics. Once they are cut to be shorter the problems start. A big problem is the tree will replace the canopy with at least 50% more branches than were originally cut off. Those sprouts turn into branches then into bigger branches. The attachment points are not safe, if the tree is in a back yard or not accessible by a bucket truck, it's very dangerous for a climber to work on. The branch needed to put our lives on have to be a certain size or the branch will break under the weight of the climber. Also, these secondary sprouts turn into branches, that will break all on their own, if they are not tended to properly. If your tree has been topped, and you don't want to do that again, but

need it pruned so it can regain health and aesthetics, there are pruning methods that may work. The tree will need yearly attention. Thin the shoots, leaving the best attachment points and deep root fertilizing the tree are required. It takes years to regrow a trees canopy so it can be strong.

Why do I say it's expensive? Because it's not much different in work as it's removal, sometimes it's more than the cost of removal because of targets we have to work the branches around while leaving scaffold stems or the trunk behind. It makes it harder. The method of how a tree is removed is different than how it's pruned (or topped).

WAIT, TREES CAN SUNBURN?

Yes, Removing too much of it's canopy exposes parts that could have been in the shade for a long time. On a hot sunny day, the bark gets hot, the wood tissue underneath isn't used to this temperature and actually sunburns. Some species of trees have very thin bark like Mountain Ash, they sunburn easily and without any pruning having been done! Sunburnt bark kills the bark cambium, which decreases the protection to the under layers of wood tissue, therefore causing the tissues to die.

OK, SO NOW WHAT? MY TREE IS HUGE, I WANTED IT MADE SHORTER BECAUSE I WORRY ABOUT IT BREAKING, IT REALLY MOVES IN STORMS, WHAT DO I DO?

Instead, we thin the tree, prune the limbs in specific spots to encourage strength in the tree, reduce the height to specific spots that work with the tree and not make it "panic". I health assess the tree finding weaker branch attachments and eliminating them. I identify any codominant unions and we decide to remove, reduce, brace them or a combination of all 3. I educate you on how trees work so you can make educated decisions and hopefully eliminate your fear.

Please let's talk about your tree before you hire someone to top it. And please know that topping creates what you are scared of.

I have an exception, in Spruce trees, they often make more than 1 leader (trunk). There are 2 solutions, top all trunks or remove extra ones leaving the one with the best attachment. It depends on tree location, growth habit, aesthetics, diameter of the trunks and health. If the decision is to top the trunks, know going forward that once a Spruce is topped it needs to be done every 3-5 years. The new growth will be heavy quickly causing breakage and can affect the health of the tree.

