

# Anti-Topping Campaign in Missouri

EXPERTS AGREE

**DON'T**  
TOP YOUR  
**TREE**

# What is topping?

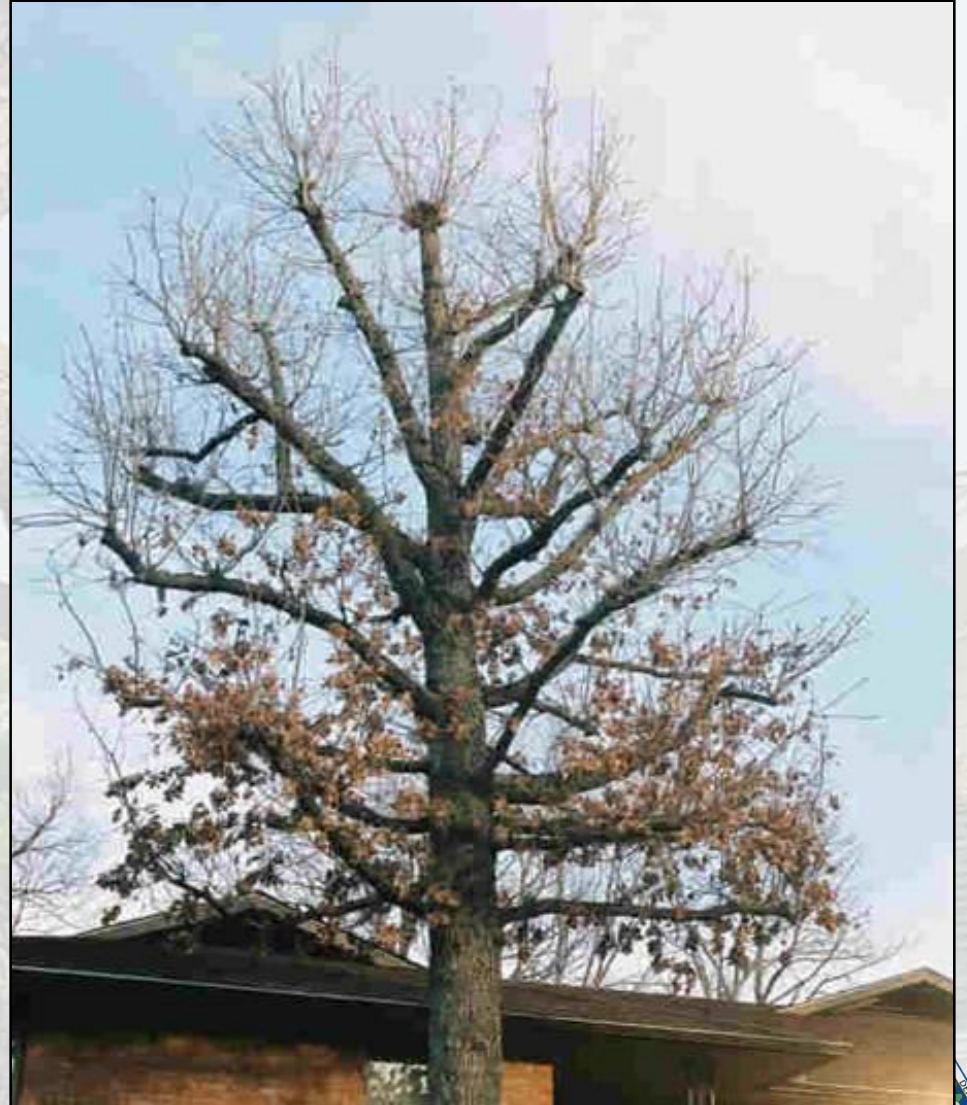
Topping is the indiscriminate cutting back of tree branches to stubs or lateral branches that are not large enough to assume the terminal role. Other names for topping include "heading," "tipping," "hat-racking," and "rounding over."





# What is topping?

The drastic removal of large branches which leaves large, open wounds subject to decay and disease.



# What is topping?

Topping is the removal of vertical leader stems on large trees and the cuts are usually made between nodes or at internodes.





# **Top Ten Topping Myths**

Prepared by: Ann Koenig, Jon Skinner, Missouri Department of Conservation



# 10. Topping Rejuvenates The Tree

- Topping removes extreme amounts of energy-converting foliage from the tree.
- Forces tree to tap energy reserves to replace it.
- Weakened tree is more susceptible to attack by pests.



## 9. Topping is inexpensive

- The actual cost of topping is not in the initial bill. It is more expensive because:
- The tree needs maintenance more often
- Poorly attached branches break off (possibly damaging something else)
- The tree will die prematurely and will need to be removed and replaced
- Property value are reduced
- Liability is increased



## 8. A Topped Tree Is More Attractive

- If you like hat racks, yes the tree would be more attractive.
- A tree's natural form is to be prized. Trees have multiple crown shapes. Select the tree that has the shape you desire.



## 7. Trees Can Handle Topping

- Some trees can withstand topping better than others, but all are damaged.
- The life of a topped tree is shortened by increased susceptibility to pests and decay.
- The re-growth called sprouts is poorly attached to the tree and breaks off easily.



## 6. Topping Makes The Tree Fuller

- Many trees will send out or “flush” large amounts of foliage to replace the leaves removed.
- New growth is dense and may appear to be fuller.
- Unfortunately, new branches are poorly attached and easily break, and topped branches are open for attack by pests and decay.



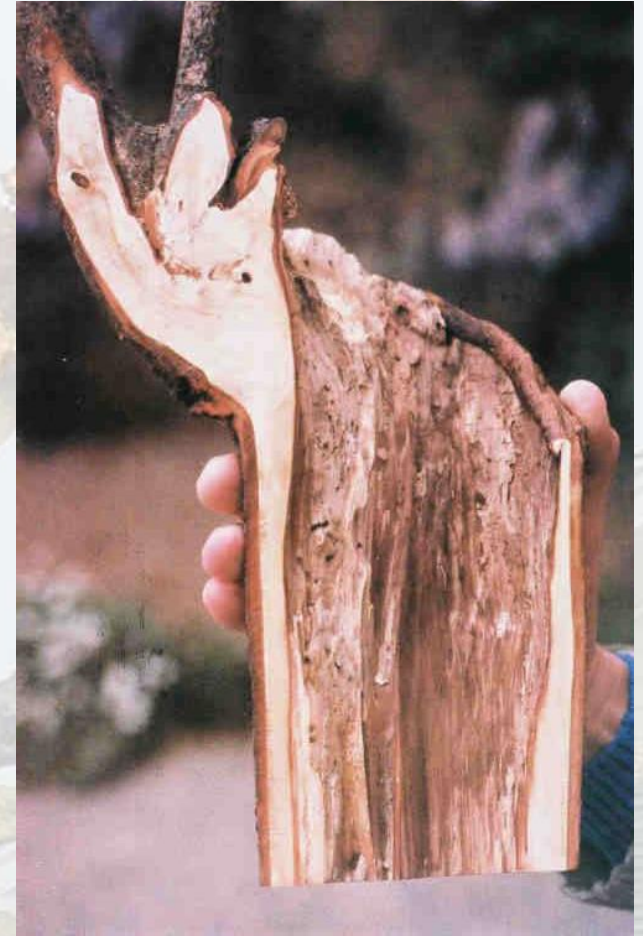
## 5. I See Topping Done All The Time

- Just because something is done by others does not make it correct.
- People thought the earth was flat, but we now know it is round.
- Research has shown us pruning techniques that work with the trees biology, not against it.



## 4. New Growth is Stronger

- The new growth usually grows faster, but is not stronger.
- Due to its growth rate, it is more susceptible to damage and infection.
- New growth is poorly attached and easily breaks off.





### 3. Topping Will Help The Tree's Health

- A declining tree will not be helped by removing its ability to feed itself.
- Topping forces it to use energy reserves it could have used elsewhere.
- Proper diagnosis of the problem, then addressing it will help the tree, but even then some trees will die.



## 2. The Tree Cast Too Much Shade

- Some species of trees do cast dense shade and restrict what kind of plants may grow under them, if any.
- The canopy of a tree may be thinned with proper pruning to allow more sunlight through, while not doing severe damage.



# 1. The Tree Got “Too Big”

- Trees Never get “Too Big”
- Trees have a genetic disposition to be a certain size.
- Environmental factors affect the potential size.
- Selection of smaller trees is always a better choice, if tree size is a concern.

# Missouri's Anti-Topping Campaign Sponsors



Additional support provided in part by the Society of American Foresters and the Midwest Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture

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# Missouri's Anti-Topping Campaign

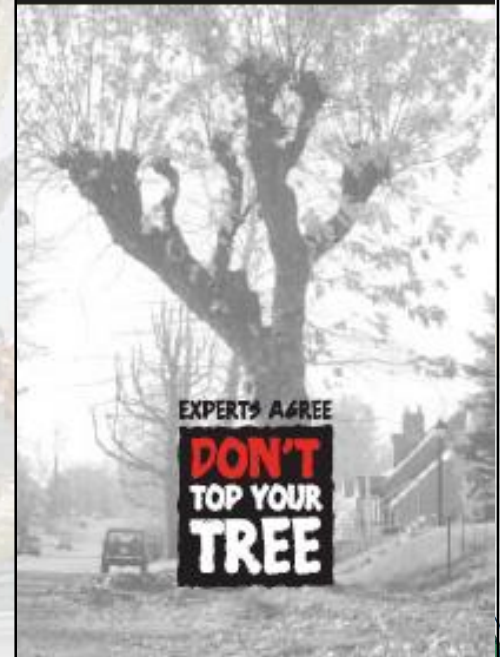
- Started in 1998.
- Committee included reps from Ameren and the Cooperative ROW Association.
- \$22,000 through MDC and US Forest Service for development of campaign materials and printing.
- Started campaign with media push.



# Missouri's Anti-Topping Campaign

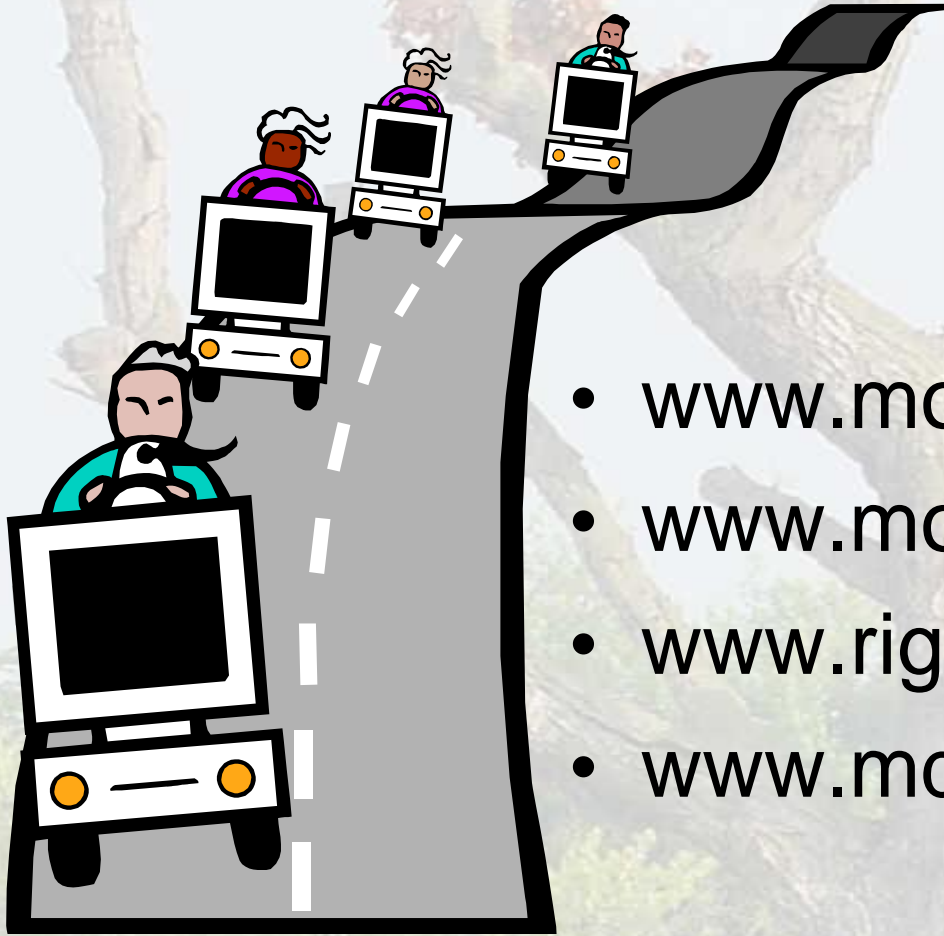
- Brochures
- Series of news releases
- Four public service ads
- Posters
- Toll-free hotline  
1-877-40-NO TOP

**Think Of It As  
A Really, Really  
Bad Haircut...  
Which Could  
Kill You.**



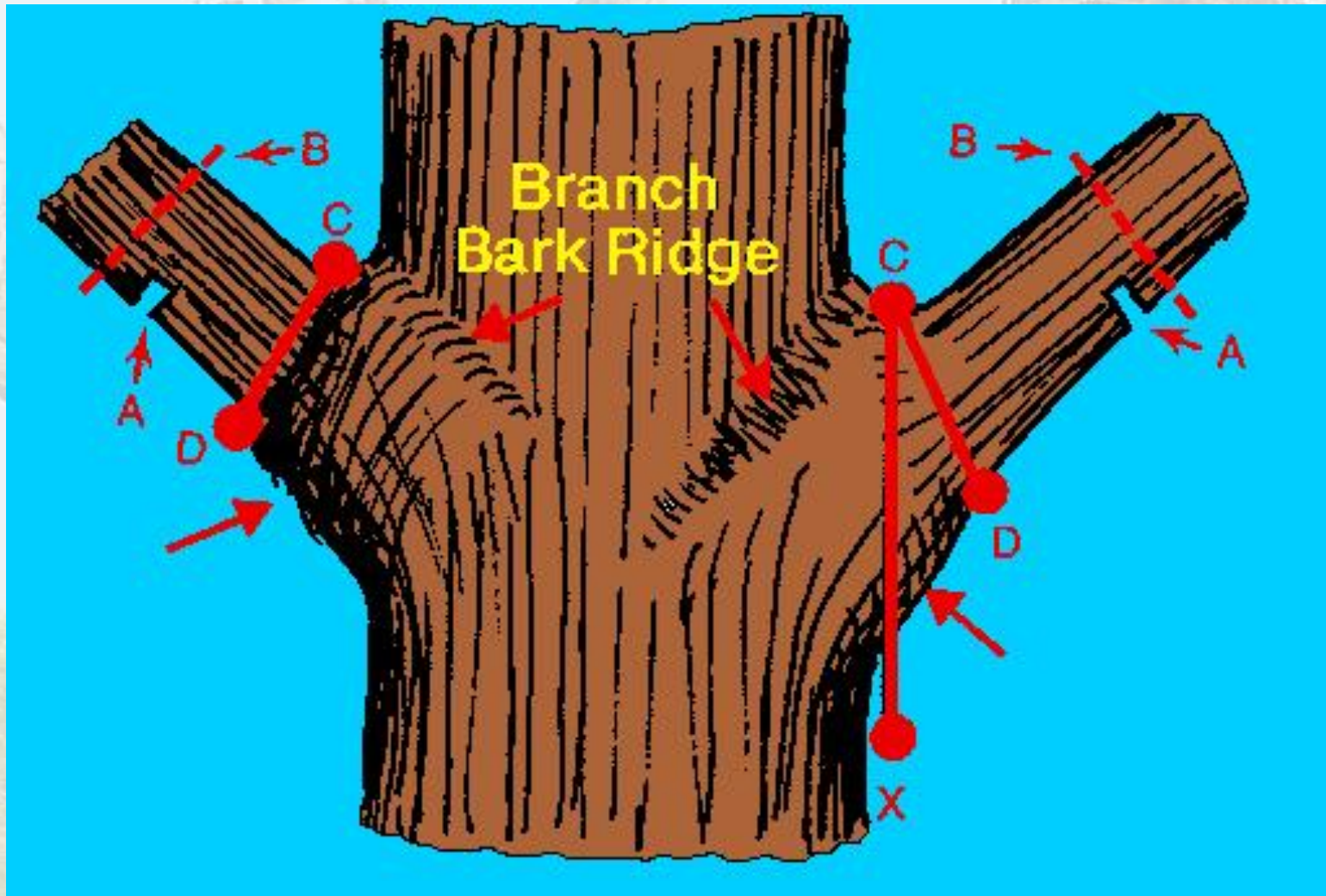


# Web Sites



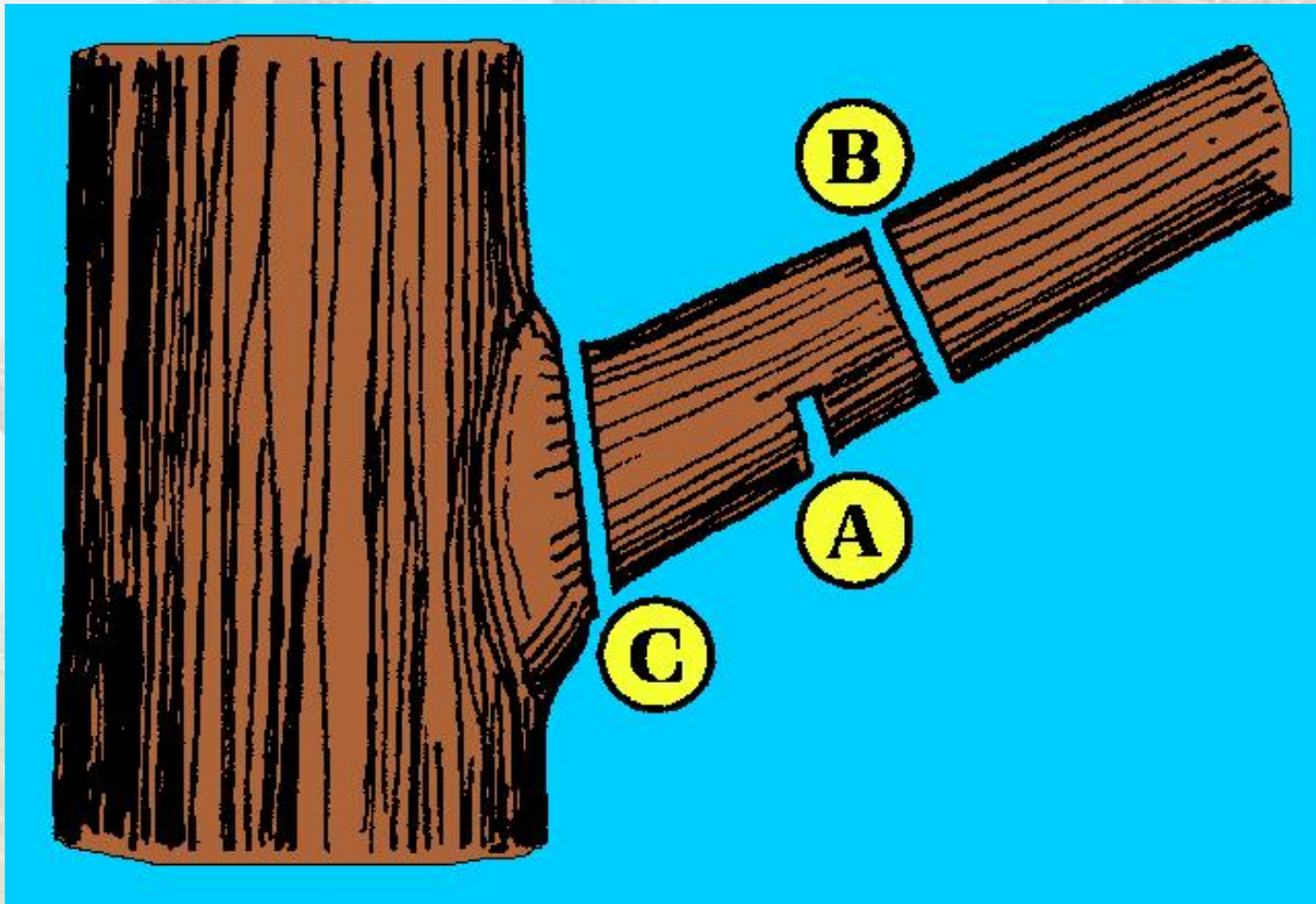
- [www.mocommunitytrees.com](http://www.mocommunitytrees.com)
- [www.moreleaf.org](http://www.moreleaf.org)
- [www.righttreerightplace.com](http://www.righttreerightplace.com)
- [www.mdc.mo.gov/forest/urban/](http://www.mdc.mo.gov/forest/urban/)

# Pruning Technique

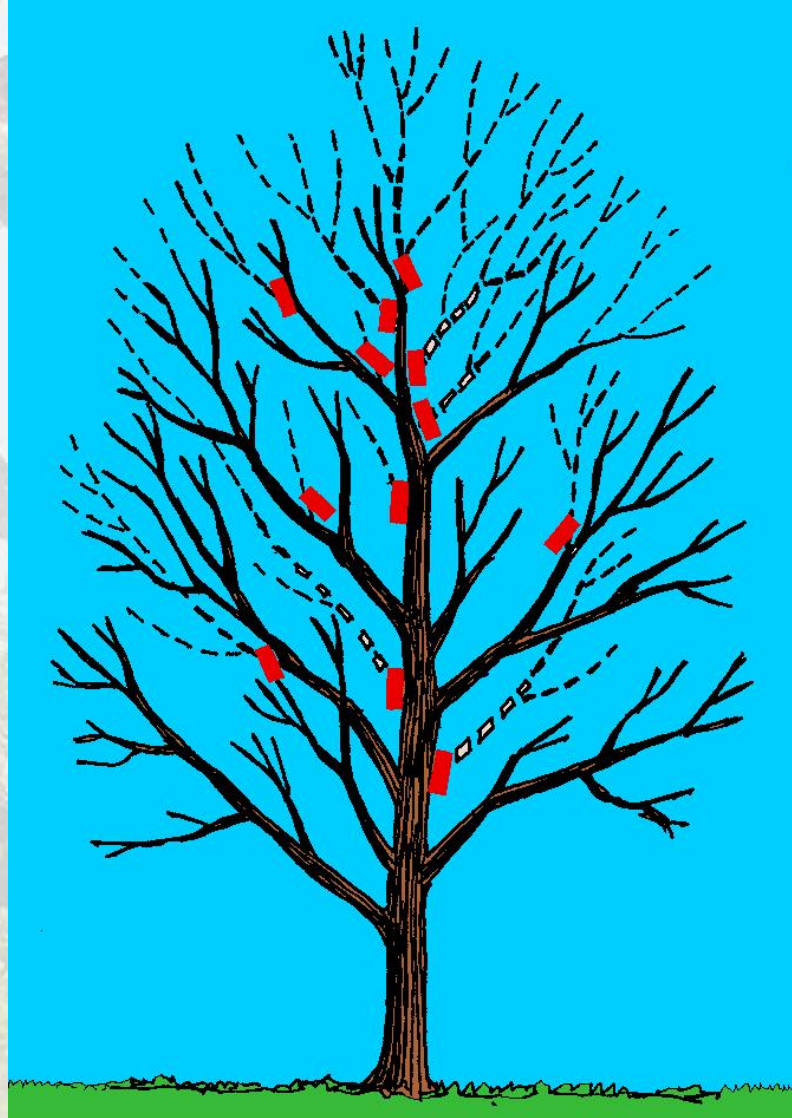




# Pruning Technique



# Crown Reduction / Proper Thinning



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# Don't Top Trees



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