



5 REASONS TO STOP TOPPING TREES



What's wrong with topping?

Tree topping is the removal of large amounts of leaves and branches from a tree's crown. In some cases all of the leaves and branches are removed, leaving large stubs where branches were cut. Tree topping hurts trees, shortens their lives and creates dangerous trees that will drop branches in the future.

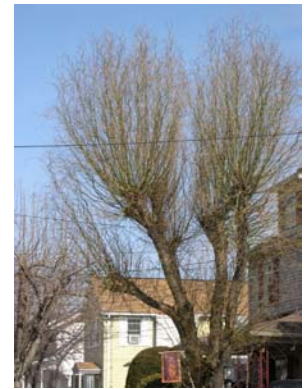
1. IT WON'T WORK

Many people top a tree to make it smaller. It doesn't work! After a tree is topped, it grows back rapidly in an attempt to replace its missing leaves. Leaves are needed to manufacture food for the tree. Without new leaves the tree will die.

The new branches that sprout up below the cuts will continue to grow quickly until they reach the same size they were before they were topped.

Sometimes topped trees will not grow back quickly; instead it will slowly die in the coming years.

Some types of trees grow tall and some stay smaller or shorter. If you don't want a tree to get too big, then it is best to plant a type of tree that doesn't grow too tall. You can't "stop" trees from growing tall by topping. If you do succeed, you have killed them.



2. IT STARVES A TREE

Simply, a tree's leaves manufacture its food (Photosynthesis). Repeated removal of a tree's food source literally starves the tree over time. When it is topped it must use stored (reserves) food to grow back new leaves and branches.



3. IT'S UGLY

Topped trees are ugly. They lose their natural, majestic look once they are topped. The new growth of thin upright branches looks like a broom to some. The natural form and appearance that took years for the tree to grow can be destroyed forever in a few hours by an un-informed tree pruner who tops.

4. IT'S DANGEROUS



According to Dr. Alex Shigo, world renowned scientist and author of books on the care of trees, topping is the most serious injury you can inflict upon your tree. Topping and re-topping can cause internal columns of rotten, weakened wood. A topped tree can quickly become unsafe, and begin to drop branches on homes, cars and people. Ironically, many people top their trees because they think it will make them safer.

Topping creates un-safe trees in three ways:

- ◆ **IT ROTS.** Topping opens the tree up to an invasion of rotting organisms. A tree can defend itself from rot when proper cuts are made in relationship with branch collars. It cannot stop the spread of decay when it is topped. Rotted limbs or the entire tree may fall years after it was topped.
- ◆ **WEAK LIMBS.** New quick growing branches (or sprouts) are weakly attached and break easily in wind or snow storms- even after many years later when they are large and heavy.
- ◆ **INCREASED WIND RESISTANCE.** The thick re-growth of new branches (sprouts) caused by topping make the tree top-heavy and more likely to catch the wind. This increases the chance of blow-down in a storm. A tree can be properly pruned (thinned) to allow wind to pass through the branches.

5. IT'S EXPENSIVE



Once it is topped, a tree must be topped every few years and eventually must be removed when it dies or the owner gives up. This will cost lots of money. Proper pruning actually improves the health and beauty of a tree, needs less maintenance and costs less in the long run.

Topped trees are weakened trees that don't provide the same important benefits to our environment that come from large shade trees.



SPREAD THE WORD! TOPPING DOESN'T WORK! Help keep our trees healthy and beautiful.

**For More Information on Proper Tree Pruning and
the Destructive Effects of Tree Topping**

visit www.PATrees.org

or call the local Penn State Cooperative Extension Office in your county.