



NEWS RELEASE

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Tree Care Tip: Stop Before You Top

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. – Spring is a season of cleaning, planting flowers, and performing yard work. Before residents undertake the expense and time to perform tree work, the City would like to provide some tips on proper tree care, as healthy trees are an asset to the City.

A tree sometimes needs to be pruned to avoid interference with utility lines, buildings, or parts of the surrounding environment. Whenever pruning is required, it is important to avoid the practice of topping.

Topping is the removal of tree branches above a certain height with little consideration for the tree's structure or health. Tree branches are cut back to stubs or smaller branches which are not strong enough to grow back as a single, dominate branch, instead, a flush of regrowth surrounds the wound.

Topping of trees or the severe cutting of limbs to stubs larger than three inches in diameter within the tree crown to such a degree as to remove the normal canopy is not proper maintenance of trees as required by the City's Landscape Ordinance Sec 27 (o) (2), which relates to commercial properties or other properties within the city that have required landscaping as part of an approved site plan.

While long thought to reduce a hazard, the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) warns that topping is a temporary and ineffective solution that actually makes a tree more hazardous in the long run.

- Topping "starves" trees by robbing them of their food-creating leaves.
- Topped trees create shoots in an act of defense, which grow quickly (up to 20 feet in one year) and are prone to breaking.
- Topping makes trees more susceptible to insects and disease.
- Topping creates "high maintenance trees" that are expensive to treat, repair, and care for.
- Topping makes trees ugly - Besides the harm it can cause your tree, a topped tree can be an eye-sore. Topping both destroys the natural form of the tree and creates stubs

where branches used to flourish. Without leaves, the tree appears disfigured. Once a tree has been topped, it will never fully regain its natural form and beauty.

- Topping is not an acceptable practice within the tree and landscape industry.

Here are some tree-trimming basics:

- Reduction pruning is an effective alternative to topping. It reduces the size of longer branches by cutting back lateral ones. Some branches are removed at their point of origin.
- Avoid excessive thinning of interior branches. It can lead to rapid growth of upright interior shoots and limb breakage.
- The best way to learn to manage tree growth and maintain tree health is to consult an ISA Certified Arborist first. These tree care professionals know how to safely prune trees, and they can teach homeowners how to best maintain and care for them.

The City's Urban Environmental Department is available to answer questions on tree pruning and provide you with tips, information, and resources for proper tree care by calling 615-895-8059.

For additional information on tree care, please visit <http://youtu.be/KEk2TDnHeJY>.

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