



Basic Pruning Cuts Explained

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When you know how to make a proper cut, pruning is not as scary

In general:

- In the North, prune in late spring (March-April)
- Use the best tools you can afford
 - You need – Bypass Hand Pruner, Bypass Lopper and a Pruning Saw
 - Sharpen your tool's cutting edge! Use a small file or a sharpening tool especially for pruners
- *Note how to make the proper cuts in the slides that follow*
- Ideal: The tree should be growing upward and outward
- Start by removing obvious branches that are Dead or Diseased, grow Downward, Inward, Straight Upward or ones that Cross each other
- Step back and observe the tree. Stop at 25% removal this year
- Watch this video for the basics of how to prune any tree:

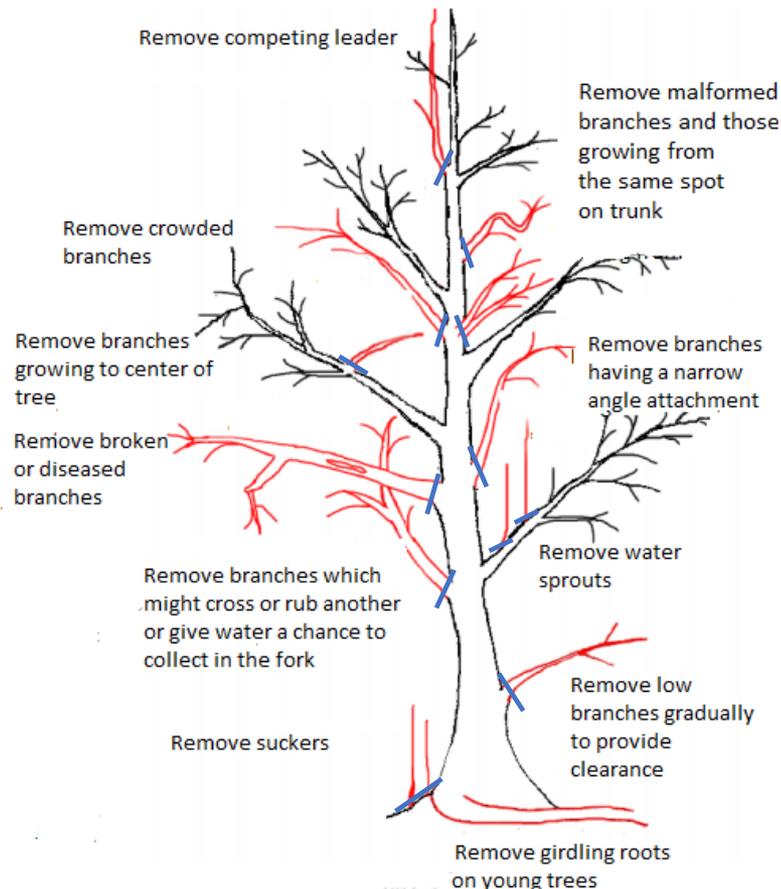
University of Maine Extension – How to Prune a Crabapple Tree

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=feeVCNvGd2s>

Where to make a pruning cut

Cut right where the branch meets the collar.

The collar area produces hormones that will help heal the cut.

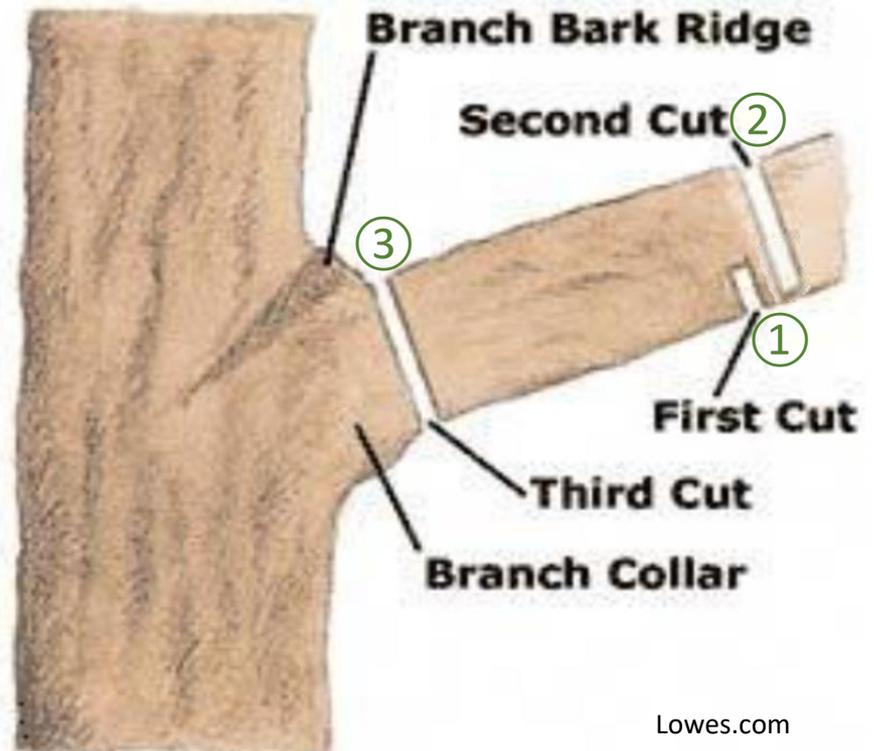


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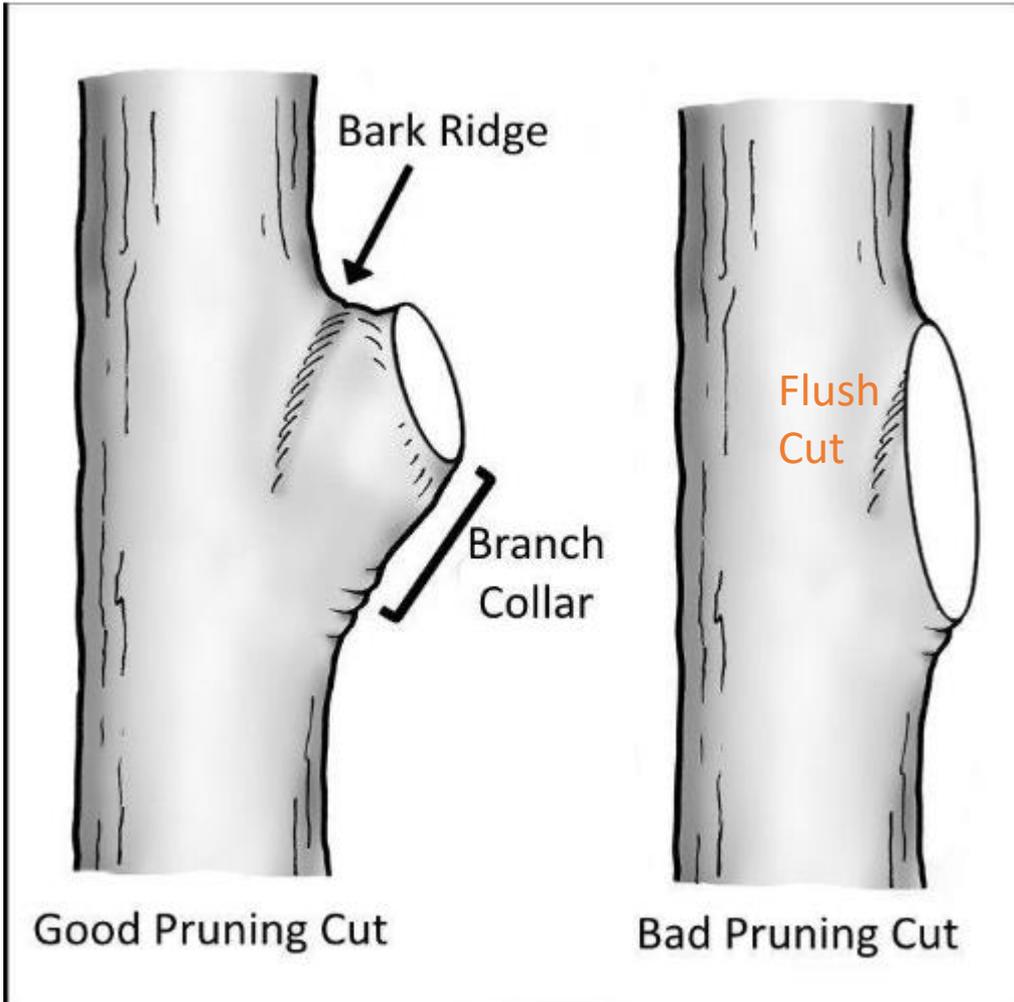
3 steps to cut a large branch that might tear:



Cuts ① & ② remove the outer weight so that during the final cut ③, the bark doesn't tear down the trunk.

Mistake: **Flush Cuts**

“Flush cuts” are made too deeply, leaving a large wound.



Jason Graves/K-State Research and Extension

Proper cuts are round and symmetrical



NC State Extension

A flush cut with tearing.
Flush cuts are oval shaped
Cut w 3 steps to prevent tearing

Mistake: **Stubs**

*Do not cut too far away from the collar's healing zone.
Healing hormones can't reach far.*

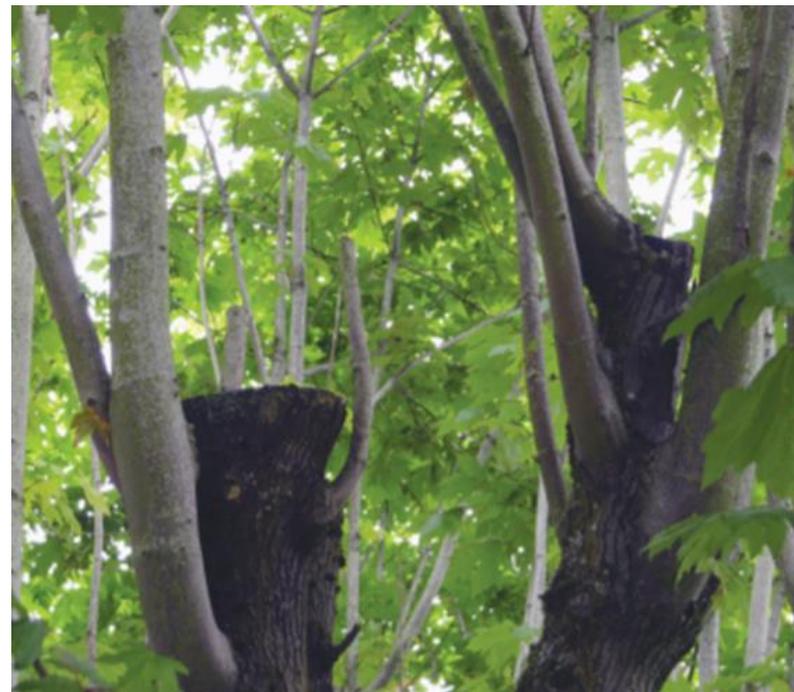


Stubs will die and diseases will enter

Don't leave stubs. Cut to the next living **branch** or **bud** to allow the cut to heal and to avoid weak sucker growth.



Colorado State Forest Service



WSU Extension. Tree Topping: A Practice to Avoid

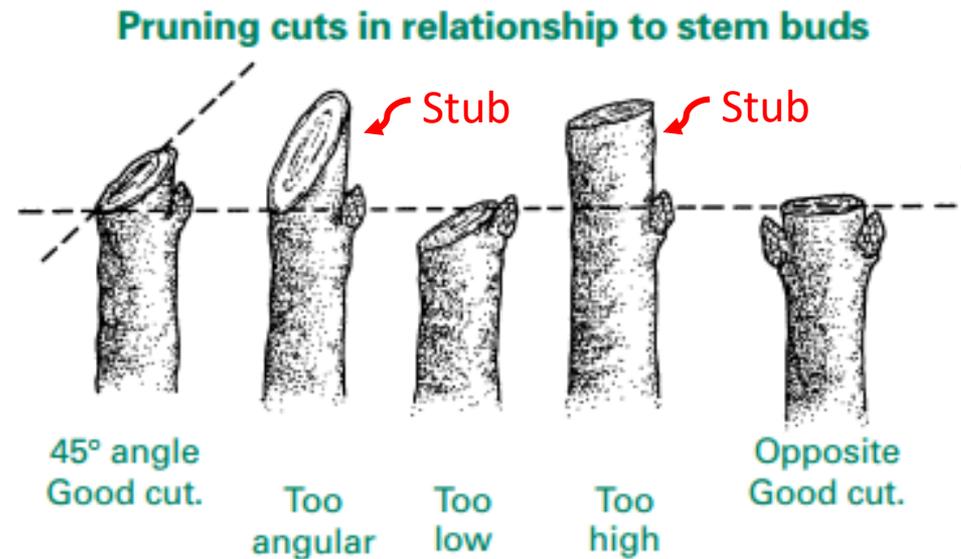
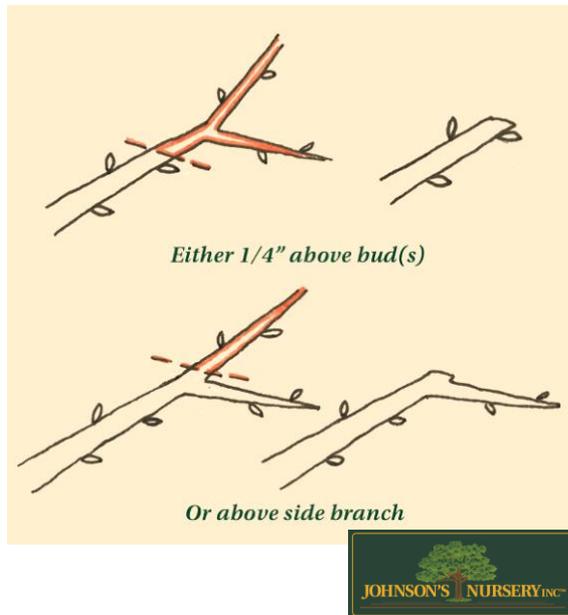
A stub cut encourages hidden buds to sprout into dense, weak sucker branches.

Finer cuts

These cuts allow you to shape a woody plant.

Make these cuts just above a **bud** or **branch** which will lead the new growth.

A live **bud** or **branch** provides energy and hormones to heal the cut.



New growth will follow the direction of the remaining bud or branch.

ISU Extension

Pruning: More Reading or Viewing

- NDSU Basic Guidelines for Pruning Trees and Shrubs
 - <https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/publications/lawns-gardens-trees/basic-guidelines-for-pruning-trees-and-shrubs> Text & Video
- Colorado State Forest Service
 - https://static.colostate.edu/client-files/csfs/pdfs/PDF_QuickandDirtyPruning_12.pdf
- Blog posts from Quickcrop Ltd in Ireland
 - <https://www.quickcrop.co.uk/blog/introduction-pruning-apple-trees/>
 - <https://www.quickcrop.co.uk/blog/prune-mature-apple-trees/>
- Disinfect Pruning Tools *(I make a 1:5 dilution- 1 part Lysol plus 4 parts water)*
 - <http://calag.ucanr.edu/archive/?type=pdf&article=ca.v045n04p21>