

# How to prune trees

## Why prune?

For many of us, trees are our nearest neighbors. They provide shade from the summer sun, protection from winter winds and add beauty to the landscape. For the most part, they grow on their own without much more than an occasional glance from us. But there are times when we need to become more involved and prune.

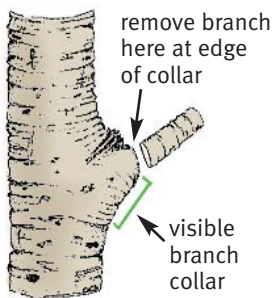
The main reasons to prune are:

- Improve overall structure, reduce the risk of branches breaking or trunks splitting
- Provide clearance from buildings and structures
- Allow more light to reach ground-cover plants
- Remove dead or diseased branches

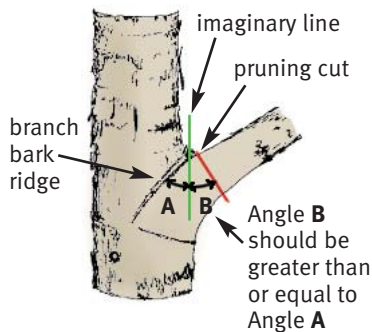
## Removing branches

Carefully examine the branch to be removed. For the wound to close properly, it's important to make your cuts in the proper location. Plan to remove the branch without disturbing the branch collar.

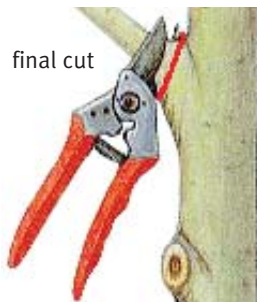
### Visible branch collar



### No visible branch collar

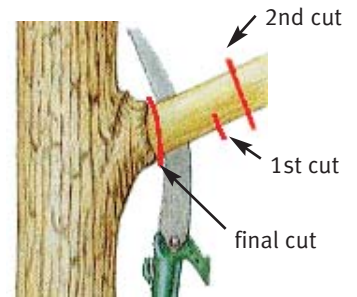


Use pruning shears on smaller branches. Make sure that your tools are clean and sharp.

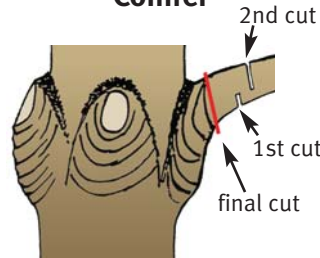


For larger branches, use a saw. The first cut prevents bark ripping. The second cut removes the majority of the branch. The third, or final, cut removes the remaining stub.

### Deciduous



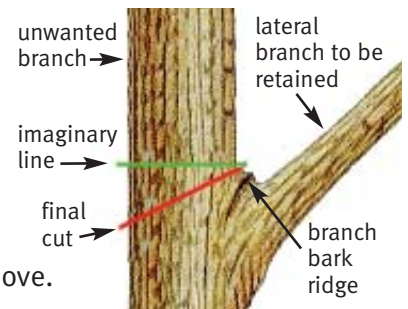
### Conifer



The branch collar on conifer trees looks a little different than the collar on deciduous trees. But you can follow the same three-cut process to prune the tree.

## Reducing a dead, damaged or broken branch

Reducing or removing a dead, damaged or broken branch takes careful consideration. Before you start, be sure you can control the weight of the section you intend to remove.



The retained branch should be at least one-third the size of the branch being removed.

Here's how to determine the angle for your final cut. Establish an imaginary line across the branch to be removed. Bisect (divide into two equal portions) the angle created between the imaginary line and the branch bark ridge. This angle is your final cut.

## Pruning resources

Some jobs are best suited for professional arborists. To learn more about pruning safety and hiring a professional arborist, visit [mge.com/trees](http://mge.com/trees). You'll find links to resources that offer more information.