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Decorah Street Department

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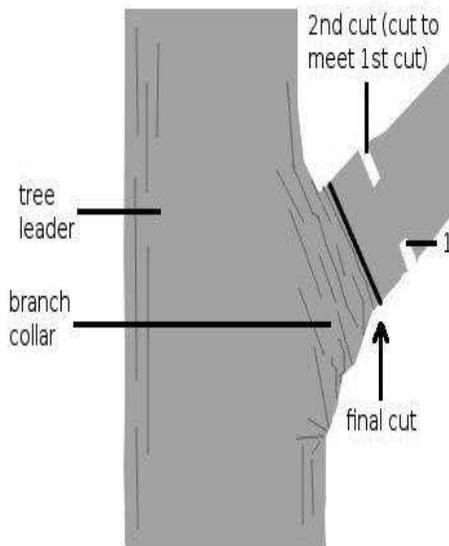
Early Spring a Good Time to Prune Trees

Decorah, IA (March 24, 2021) – Early spring is an ideal time to prune your young trees, according to the Decorah Tree Board. Proper pruning will help prolong the life of your trees by reducing the risk of breakage as the trees grow. Pruning will also help your trees develop attractive, symmetrical shapes. Tools that are useful for pruning young trees include hand shears, loppers, and pruning saws. Make sure your tools are sharp so you get a clean cut and do not crush or tear the branches you are pruning.

Here are some tree pruning tips:

- One of the most important things to remember when pruning a tree is that trees **cannot heal** themselves. Trees can only seal wounds so any wound you create will be with that tree for the rest of its life.
- Wound dressing is not recommended to seal wounds on trees. Research has shown that wound dressings may actually harm the tree. Only apply a wound dressing if you must prune an oak tree during oak wilt season (April through July).
- Remove any branches that are dead, broken, or rubbing against other branches.
- Prune to maintain a central main stem that is as straight as possible and taller than the tree's side branches. Remove or shorten any branches competing with this stem.
- Remember that the branches attached to the main stem (trunk) will eventually become the main limbs of the tree. These main limbs should begin around ten (10) to fifteen (15) feet from the ground. All lower branches should be considered temporary for proper trunk development and to make street and sidewalk clearance easier to maintain. Select the strongest and sturdiest ones, and prune away competing branches. Make sure the branches you select are well-spaced along the main stem, with only one branch at each level. Favor branches that form a wide angle with the main stem, as these will have the strongest attachments.
- When pruning a branch off, do not leave a stub! Always remove the entire branch, but take care that you do not sever the thickened, collar-like area at the base of the branch, as this is crucial when the tree begins to seal its wound. Improper pruning cuts are more likely to lead to pest infestation, disease, rot, or even tree death.

- Be careful when removing large branches, so they do not break before you are done cutting them, tearing the bark as they fall and creating a large wound. Cut such branches with a 3-step process as shown in the accompanying diagram.



- Do not prune oak trees from April through July as wounds made at that time will attract the beetles that spread oak wilt disease.

When hiring a contractor for tree work, it is important to hire someone who is qualified for the job. The City of Decorah recommends an ISA Certified Arborist for any tree work. Credentials generally mean a more professional and qualified individual is doing the work.

For more information, please contact City Forester Sam Hogenson at 563-277-5153 or by e-mail at cityforester@decorahia.org. Additional information is also available on the Decorah Tree Board website at <https://www.decorahia.org/tree-board>.

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