UF UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA
IFAS Extension

Pruning shade trees in the landscape

Pruning cut types

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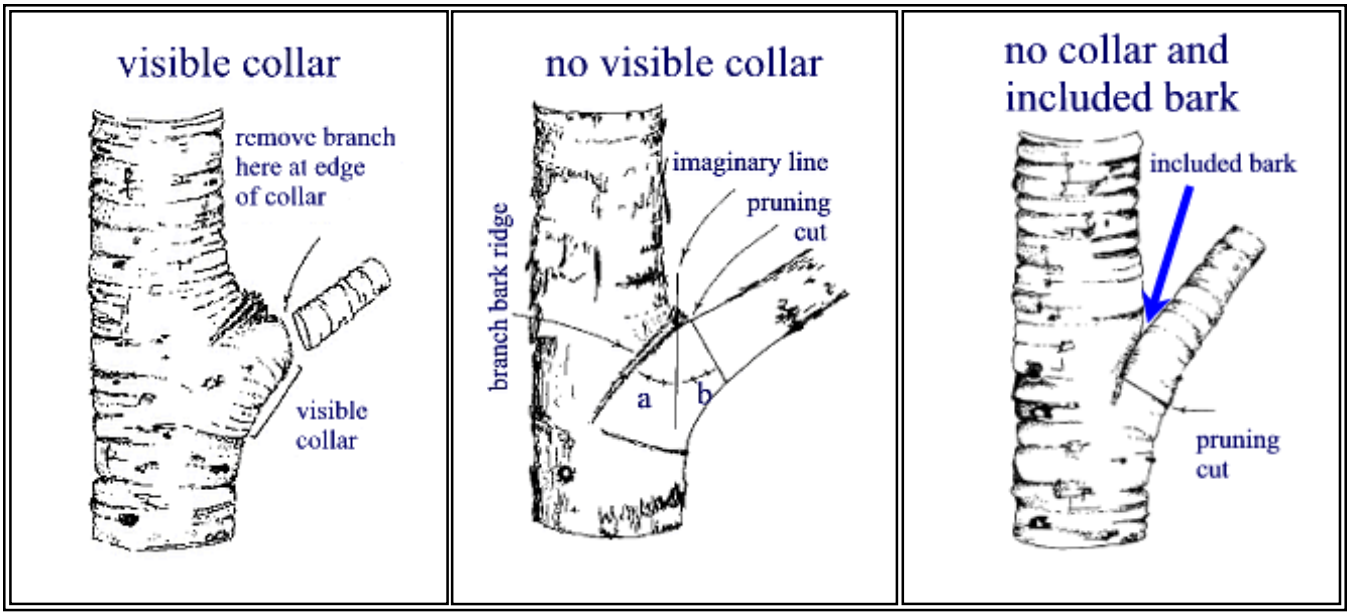
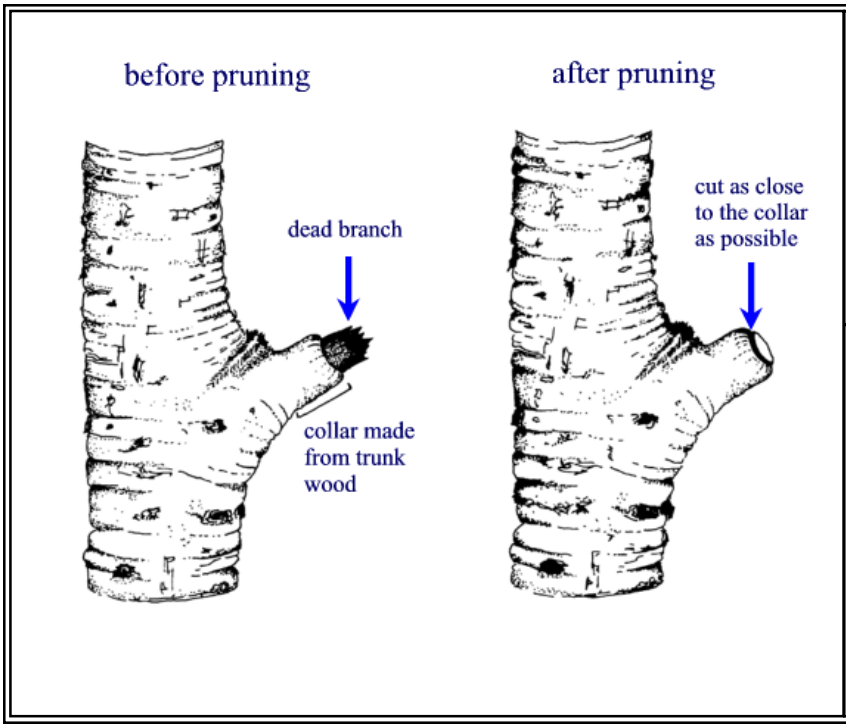
Live branch removal



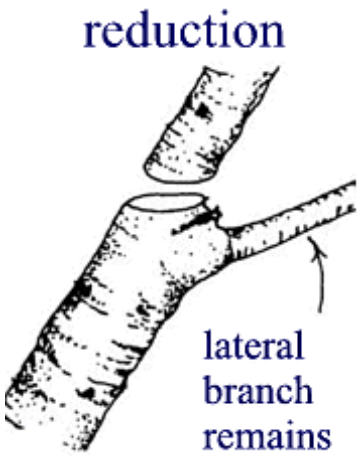
Dead branch removal



Before pruning: A collar of trunk wood begins to grow out onto a dead branch that remains on the tree. Be sure not to cut into this collar. Cutting into the collar amounts to cutting into the trunk. Removing dead branches is good for the health of trees.

After pruning: Cut all dead branch tissue from the tree, but do not injure the collar. If the branch is small or severely decayed, you might be able to simply break the dead branch from the tree. This often allows you to remove more of the dead tissue inside the edge of the collar. Do not break the dead branch if this could injure the collar.

Stem reduction

Appropriate reduction	Inappropriate reduction
	

A reduction cut (also referred to as a drop-crotch cut) removes a stem back to a lateral branch that is at least one-third the diameter of the cut stem. Sprouts commonly follow a reduction cut, especially if a large portion (greater than about one-quarter) of the live foliage was removed with the cut. If the branch that remains is less than one-third the diameter of the cut stem, the cut is considered a heading cut. Reduction cuts are used to reduce the length of a stem or branch. Heading cuts are not considered appropriate in most instances in the landscape.

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