



# WEST WINDSOR TOWNSHIP

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT Shade Tree Commission

### Tree Maintenance

#### Prune

Proper pruning removes the parts of the tree that are not required or effective. By removing unnecessary parts, the tree's energy goes to the healthy limbs. However, be careful to use the proper techniques and tools because improper pruning can injure or kill a tree. Prune as few branches as possible, as even proper pruning stresses the tree.

#### Three steps to pruning a branch:

1. Make a small wedge shaped cut on the underside of the branch just on the branch side of the branch collar. This will break the bark at that point and prevent a tear from running along the bark and stem tissue.
2. Somewhat farther along the branch, starting at the top of the branch, cut all the way through the branch leaving a stub end.
3. Finally, make a third cut parallel to and just on the branch side of the branch collar to reduce the length of the stub as much as possible.

#### When to Prune

The best time to prune is in the dormant season, after leaf drop in fall until bud break in spring. However, limbs broken in a storm or dead branches can be removed at any time. Flowering trees are best pruned immediately after flowering occurs.

#### Reasons to Prune:

- Safety, removal of dead wood or weak branches
- Health, to remove diseased or insect infested limbs
- Structure, to improve or correct structural defects
- Repair damage caused by storms
- Training young trees
- Promote flower and fruit

#### Mulch

Mulch should never be piled up against the tree trunk. Mulching in a "volcano" shape can make the tree more susceptible to fungus, insects, and rodents. Instead mulch in a "donut" shape. Keep mulch 6 inches from the trunk and mulch out as far as the branches extend above. Keep the mulch 2-4" thick. Every spring, break up old mulch and add new to maintain a 2-4" layer.

#### Properly applied mulch provides these benefits:

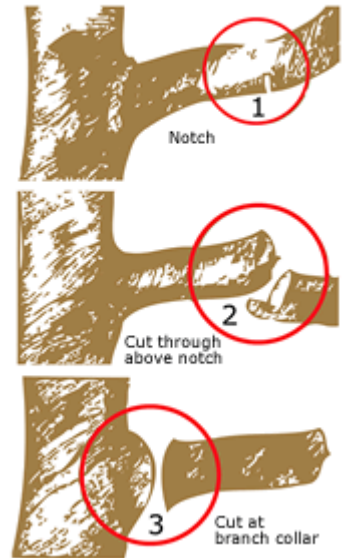
- Prevents soil compaction
- Retains water in the soil for tree roots
- Keeps lawn equipment from damaging the trunk
- Moderates temperature
- Reduces competing vegetation
- Provides nutrients to the tree as it breaks down

#### Water

During drought, sufficiently water trees. Drought stressed trees are more susceptible to pests and diseases.

#### Inspect

Thoroughly inspect trees yearly for insects, diseases, and defects such as cracks and rot. Take action to prevent hazard trees.



Source: N.J. D.E.P., Division of Parks and Forestry, Forestry Service - <http://www.nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/forest/community/Pruning.htm>