

**American National Standard**

*ANSI A300 (Part 1)-2001 Pruning  
Revision of ANSI A300-1995*

*for Tree Care Operations —  
Tree, Shrub, and Other Woody Plant  
Maintenance —  
Standard Practices (Pruning)*

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**ANSI®**  
**A300 (Part 1)-2001**  
Revision of  
**ANSI A300-1995**

American National Standard  
for Tree Care Operations –  
Tree, Shrub, and Other Woody Plant Maintenance –  
Standard Practices (*Pruning*)

Secretariat

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Approved May 22, 2001

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# American National Standard

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**Forward** (This foreword is not part of American National Standard A300 Part 1-2001.)

An industry-consensus standard must have the input of the industry that it is intended to affect. The Accredited Standards Committee A300 was approved June 28, 1991. The committee includes representatives from the residential and commercial tree care industry, the utility, municipal, and federal sectors, the landscape and nursery industries, and other interested organizations. Representatives from varied geographic areas with broad knowledge and technical expertise contributed.

The A300 standard can be best placed in proper context if one reads its *Scope*, *Purpose*, and *Application*. This document presents performance standards for the care and maintenance of trees, shrubs, and other woody plants. It is intended as a guide in the drafting of maintenance specifications for federal, state, municipal, and private authorities including property owners, property managers, and utilities.

The A300 standard stipulates that specifications for tree work should be written and administered by a professional possessing the technical competence to provide for, or supervise, the management of woody landscape plants. Users of this standard must first interpret its wording, then apply their knowledge of growth habits of certain plant species in a given environment. In this manner, the user ultimately develops their own specifications for plant maintenance.

ANSI A300 Part 1 – *Pruning*, should be used in conjunction with the rest of the A300 standard when writing specifications for tree care operations.

Suggestions for improvement of this standard should be forwarded to: NAA300 Secretary, c/o National Arborist Association, 3 Perimeter Rd. - Unit 1, Manchester, NH 03103, USA or Email: [naa@natlarb.com](mailto:naa@natlarb.com).

This standard was processed and approved for submittal to ANSI by Accredited Standards Committee on Tree, Shrub, and Other Woody Plant Maintenance Operations – *Standard Practices*, A300. Committee approval of the standard does not necessarily imply that all committee members voted for its approval. At the time it approved this standard, the A300 committee had the following members:

Tim Johnson, Chair (Artistic Arborist, Inc.)

Bob Rouse, Secretary (National Arborist Association, Inc.)

<i>Organizations Represented</i>	<i>Name of Representative</i>
American Forests .....	Staff (Observer)
American Nursery and Landscape Association .....	Craig J. Regelbrugge
American Society of Consulting Arborists .....	Andrew Graham Donald Blair (Adviser) Beth Palys (Adviser)
American Society of Landscape Architects .....	Ron Leighton
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Associated Landscape Contractors of America .....	Preston Leyshon Jeff Bourne (Alt.)
The Davey Tree Expert Company .....	Joseph Tommasi Dick Jones (Alt.) Richard Rathjens (Adviser)
The F.A. Bartlett Tree Expert Company .....	Peter Becker Dr. Thomas Smiley (Alt.)
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National Park Service.....	Robert DeFeo
Professional Grounds Management Society .....	Kevin O'Donnell
Society of Municipal Arborists .....	Andrew Hillman
U.S. Forest Service .....	Ed Macie Mike Galvin (Alt.) Philip D. Rodbell (Alt.)

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*Name of Representative*

Utility Arborist Association .....	Jeffery Smith
	Matt Simons (Alt.)

# American National Standard for Tree Care Operations –

## Tree, Shrub, and Other Woody Plant Maintenance – Standard Practices (Pruning)

### 1 ANSI A300 standards

#### 1.1 Scope

ANSI A300 standards present performance standards for the care and maintenance of trees, shrubs, and other woody plants.

#### 1.2 Purpose

ANSI A300 standards are intended as guides for federal, state, municipal and private authorities including property owners, property managers, and utilities in the drafting of their maintenance specifications.

#### 1.3 Application

ANSI A300 standards shall apply to any person or entity engaged in the business, trade, or performance of repairing, maintaining, or preserving trees, shrubs, or other woody plants.

#### 1.4 Implementation

Specifications for tree maintenance should be written and administered by an arborist.

### 2 Part 1 – Pruning standards

#### 2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide standards for developing specifications for tree pruning.

#### 2.2 Reasons for pruning

The reasons for tree pruning may include, but are not limited to, reducing risk, maintaining or improving tree health and structure, improving aesthetics, or satisfying a specific need. Pruning practices for agricultural, horticultural production, or silvicultural purposes are exempt from this standard.

#### 2.3 Safety

2.3.1 Tree maintenance shall be performed only by arborists or arborist trainees who, through related training or on-the-job experience, or both, are familiar with the practices and hazards of arboriculture and the equipment used in such operations.

2.3.2 This standard shall not take precedence over arboricultural safe work practices.

2.3.3 Operations shall comply with applicable Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards, ANSI Z133.1, as well as state and local regulations.

### 3 Normative references

The following standards contain provisions, which, through reference in the text, constitute provisions of this American National Standard. All standards are subject to revision, and parties to agreements based on this American National Standard shall apply the most recent edition of the standards indicated below.

ANSI Z60.1, *Nursery stock*

ANSI Z133.1, *Tree care operations - Pruning, trimming, repairing, maintaining, and removing trees, and cutting brush - Safety requirements*

29 CFR 1910, General industry <sup>1)</sup>

29 CFR 1910.268, Telecommunications <sup>1)</sup>

29 CFR 1910.269, Electric power generation, transmission, and distribution <sup>1)</sup>

29 CFR 1910.331 - 335, Electrical safety-related work practices <sup>1)</sup>

### 4 Definitions

4.1 **anvil-type pruning tool:** A pruning tool that

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has a sharp straight blade that cuts against a flat metal cutting surface, in contrast to a *hook-and-blade-type pruning tool* (4.21).

**4.2 apical dominance:** Inhibition of growth of lateral buds by the terminal bud.

**4.3 arboriculture:** The art, science, technology, and business of commercial, public, and utility tree care.

**4.4 arborist:** An individual engaged in the profession of arboriculture who, through experience, education, and related training, possesses the competence to provide for or supervise the management of trees and other woody plants.

**4.5 arborist trainee:** An individual undergoing on-the-job training to obtain the experience and the competence required to provide for or supervise the management of trees and other woody plants. Such trainees shall be under the direct supervision of an arborist.

**4.6 branch bark ridge:** The raised area of bark in the branch crotch that marks where the branch and parent meet.

**4.7 branch collar:** The swollen area at the base of a branch.

**4.8 callus:** Undifferentiated tissue formed by the cambium around a wound.

**4.9 cambium:** The dividing layer of cells that forms sapwood (xylem) to the inside and inner bark (phloem) to the outside.

**4.10 cleaning:** Selective pruning to remove one or more of the following parts: dead, diseased, and/or broken branches (5.6.1).

**4.11 climbing spurs:** Sharp, pointed devices affixed to a climber's boot used to assist in climbing trees. (syn.: gaffs, hooks, spurs, spikes, climbers)

**4.12 closure:** The process of woundwood covering a cut or other tree injury.

**4.13 crown:** The leaves and branches of a tree measured from the lowest branch on the trunk to the top of the tree.

**4.14 decay:** The degradation of woody tissue

caused by microorganisms.

**4.15 espalier:** The combination of pruning, supporting, and training branches to orient a plant in one plane (5.7.2).

**4.16 establishment:** The point after planting when a tree's root system has grown sufficiently into the surrounding soil to support shoot growth and anchor the tree.

**4.17 facility:** A structure or equipment used to deliver or provide protection for the delivery of an essential service, such as electricity or communications.

**4.18 final cut:** A cut that completes the removal or reduction of a branch or stub.

**4.19 frond:** A leaf of a palm.

**4.20 heading:** 1. Cutting a currently growing, or a 1-year-old shoot, back to a bud. 2. Cutting an older branch or stem back to a stub in order to meet a defined structural objective. 3. Cutting an older branch or stem back to a lateral branch not large enough to assume apical dominance in order to meet a defined structural objective. Heading may or may not be an acceptable pruning practice, depending on the application.

**4.21 hook-and-blade-type pruning tool:** A pruning tool that has a sharp curved blade that overlaps a supporting hook; in contrast to an *anvil-type pruning tool* (4.1). (syn.: by-pass pruner)

**4.22 interfering branches:** Crossing, rubbing, or upright branches that have the potential to damage tree structure and/or health.

**4.23 internodal cut:** A cut located between lateral branches or buds.

**4.24 lateral branch:** A shoot or stem growing from a parent branch or stem.

**4.25 leader:** A dominant or co-dominant, upright stem.

**4.26 limb:** A large, prominent branch.

**4.27 lion's tailing:** The removal of an excessive number of inner, lateral branches from parent



branches. Lion's tailing is not an acceptable pruning practice (5.5.7).

**4.28 mechanical pruning:** A utility pruning technique where large-scale power equipment is used to cut back branches (5.9.2.2).

**4.29 parent branch or stem:** A tree trunk, limb, or prominent branch from which shoots or stems grow.

**4.30 peeling:** *For palms:* The removal of only the dead frond bases at the point they make contact with the trunk without damaging living trunk tissue. (syn.: shaving)

**4.31 petiole:** A stalk of a leaf or frond.

**4.32 phloem:** Inner bark conducting tissues that transport organic substances, primarily carbohydrates, from leaves and stems to other parts of the plant.

**4.33 pollarding:** The maintenance of a tree by making internodal cuts to reduce the size of a young tree, followed by the annual removal of shoot growth at its point of origin (5.7.3).

**4.34 pruning:** The selective removal of plant parts to meet specific goals and objectives.

**4.35 qualified line-clearance arborist:** An individual who, through related training and on-the-job experience, is familiar with the equipment and hazards in line clearance and has demonstrated the ability to perform the special techniques involved. This individual may or may not be currently employed by a line-clearance contractor.

**4.36 qualified line-clearance arborist trainee:** An individual undergoing line-clearance training and who, in the course of such training, is familiar with the hazards and equipment involved in line clearance and has demonstrated ability in the performance of the special techniques involved. This individual shall be under the direct supervision of a qualified line-clearance arborist.

**4.37 raising:** Selective pruning to provide vertical clearance (5.6.3).

**4.38 reduction:** Selective pruning to decrease height and/or spread (5.6.4).

**4.39 remote/rural areas:** Locations associated

with very little human activity, land improvement, or development.

**4.40 restoration:** Selective pruning to improve the structure, form, and appearance of trees that have been severely headed, vandalized, or damaged (5.7.4).

**4.41 shall:** As used in this standard, denotes a mandatory requirement.

**4.42 should:** As used in this standard, denotes an advisory recommendation.

**4.43 stub:** An undesirable short length of a branch remaining after a break or incorrect pruning cut is made.

**4.44 thinning:** Selective pruning to reduce density of live branches (5.6.2).

**4.45 throwline:** A small, lightweight line with a weighted end used to position a climber's rope in a tree.

**4.46 topping:** The reduction of a tree's size using heading cuts that shorten limbs or branches back to a predetermined crown limit. Topping is not an acceptable pruning practice (5.5.7).

**4.47 tracing:** The removal of loose, damaged tissue from in and around the wound.

**4.48 urban/residential areas:** Locations, such as populated areas including public and private property, that are normally associated with human activity.

**4.49 utility:** An entity that delivers a public service, such as electricity or communications.

**4.50 utility space:** The physical area occupied by a utility's facilities and the additional space required to ensure its operation.

**4.51 vista pruning:** Selective pruning to allow a specific view (5.7.5).

**4.52 watersprouts:** New stems originating from epicormic buds. (syn.: epicormic shoots)

**4.53 wound:** An opening that is created when the bark of a live branch or stem is penetrated, cut, or removed.

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**4.54 woundwood:** Partially differentiated tissue responsible for closing wounds. Woundwood develops from callus associated with wounds.

**4.55 xylem:** Wood tissue. Active xylem is sapwood; inactive xylem is heartwood.

**4.56 young tree:** A tree young in age or a newly transplanted tree.

## 5 Pruning practices

### 5.1 Tree inspection

**5.1.1** An arborist or arborist trainee shall visually inspect each tree before beginning work.

**5.1.2** If a condition is observed requiring attention beyond the original scope of the work, the condition should be reported to an immediate supervisor, the owner, or the person responsible for authorizing the work.

### 5.2 Tools and equipment

**5.2.1** Equipment and work practices that damage living tissue and bark beyond the scope of the work should be avoided.

**5.2.2** Climbing spurs shall not be used when climbing and pruning trees.

Exceptions:

- when limbs are more than throwline distance apart and there is no other means of climbing the tree;
- when the bark is thick enough to prevent damage to the cambium;
- in remote or rural utility rights-of-way.

### 5.3 Pruning cuts

**5.3.1** Pruning tools used in making pruning cuts shall be sharp.

**5.3.2** A pruning cut that removes a branch at its point of origin shall be made close to the trunk or parent limb, without cutting into the branch bark ridge or collar, or leaving a stub (see Figure 5.3.2).

**5.3.3** A pruning cut that reduces the length of a branch or parent stem should bisect the angle between its branch bark ridge and an imaginary line perpendicular to the branch or stem (see Figure 5.3.3).

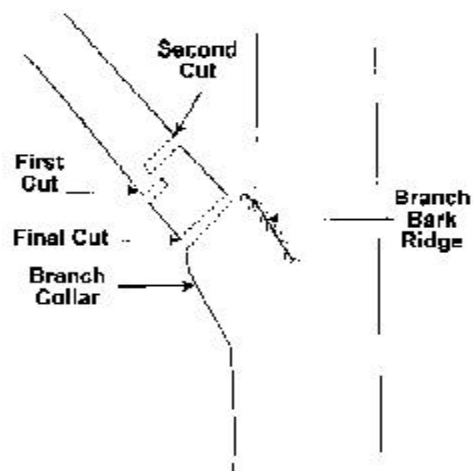
**5.3.4** The final cut shall result in a flat surface with adjacent bark firmly attached.

**5.3.5** When removing a dead branch, the final cut shall be made just outside the collar of living tissue.

**5.3.6** Tree branches shall be removed in such a manner so as not to cause damage to other parts of the tree or to other plants or property. Branches too large to support with one hand shall be precut to avoid splitting of the wood or tearing of the bark (see Figure 5.3.2). Where necessary, ropes or other equipment shall be used to lower large branches or portions of branches to the ground.

**5.3.7** A final cut that removes a branch with a narrow angle of attachment should be made from the outside of the branch to prevent damage to the parent limb (see Figure 5.3.7).

**5.3.8** Severed limbs shall be removed from the crown upon completion of the pruning, at times when the tree would be left unattended, or at the end of the workday.



**Figure 5.3.2.** – A pruning cut that removes a branch at its point of origin shall be made close to the trunk or parent limb, without cutting into the branch bark ridge or collar, or leaving a stub. Branches too large to support with one hand shall be precut to avoid splitting of the wood or tearing of the bark.

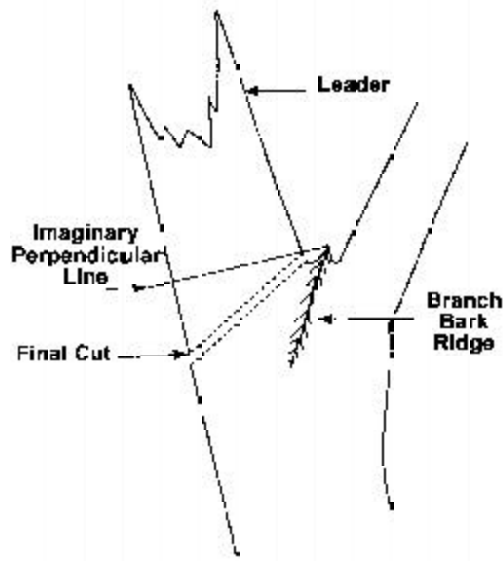


Figure 5.3.3. – A pruning cut that reduces the length of a branch or parent stem should bisect the angle between its branch bark ridge and an imaginary line perpendicular to the branch or stem.

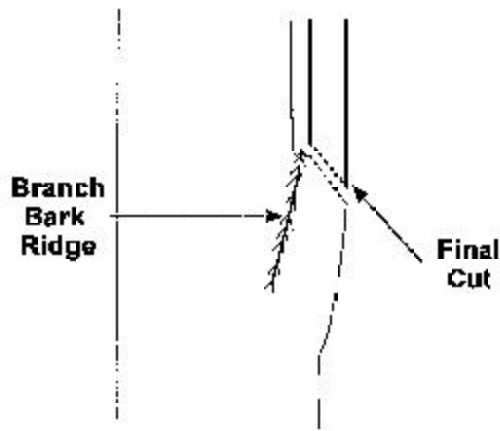


Figure 5.3.7. – A final cut that removes a branch with a narrow angle of attachment should be made from the outside of the branch to prevent damage to the parent limb.

#### 5.4 Wound treatment

5.4.1 Wound treatments should not be used to cover wounds or pruning cuts, except when recommended for disease, insect, mistletoe, or sprout control, or for cosmetic reasons.

5.4.2 Wound treatments that are damaging to tree tissues shall not be used.

5.4.3 When tracing wounds, only loose, damaged tissue should be removed.

#### 5.5 Pruning objectives

5.5.1 Pruning objectives shall be established prior to beginning any pruning operation.

5.5.2 To obtain the defined objective, the growth cycles and structure of individual species and the type of pruning to be performed should be considered.

5.5.3 Not more than 25 percent of the foliage should be removed within an annual growing season. The percentage and distribution of foliage to be removed shall be adjusted according to the plant's species, age, health, and site.

5.5.4 Not more than 25 percent of the foliage of a branch or limb should be removed when it is cut back to a lateral. That lateral should be large enough to assume apical dominance.

5.5.5 Pruning cuts should be made in accordance with 5.3 *Pruning cuts*.

5.5.6 Heading should be considered an acceptable practice for shrub or specialty pruning when needed to reach a defined objective.

5.5.7 Topping and lion's tailing shall be considered unacceptable pruning practices for trees.

#### 5.6 Pruning types

Specifications for pruning should consist of, but are not limited to, one or more of the following types:

5.6.1 **Clean:** Cleaning shall consist of selective pruning to remove one or more of the following parts: dead, diseased, and/or broken branches.

5.6.1.1 Location of parts to be removed shall be specified.

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**5.6.1.2** Size range of parts to be removed shall be specified.

**5.6.2 Thin:** Thinning shall consist of selective pruning to reduce density of live branches.

**5.6.2.1** Thinning should result in an even distribution of branches on individual limbs and throughout the crown.

**5.6.2.2** Not more than 25 percent of the crown should be removed within an annual growing season.

**5.6.2.3** Location of parts to be removed shall be specified.

**5.6.2.4** Percentage of foliage and size range of parts to be removed shall be specified.

**5.6.3 Raise:** Raising shall consist of selective pruning to provide vertical clearance.

**5.6.3.1** Vertical clearance should be specified.

**5.6.3.2** Location and size range of parts to be removed should be specified.

**5.6.4 Reduce:** Reduction shall consist of selective pruning to decrease height and/or spread.

**5.6.4.1** Consideration shall be given to the ability of a species to tolerate this type of pruning.

**5.6.4.2** Location of parts to be removed and clearance should be specified.

**5.6.4.3** Size range of parts should be specified.

### 5.7 Specialty pruning

Consideration shall be given to the ability of a species to tolerate specialty pruning, using one or more pruning types (5.6).

#### 5.7.1 Young trees

**5.7.1.1** The reasons for young tree pruning may include, but are not limited to, reducing risk, maintaining or improving tree health and structure, improving aesthetics, or satisfying a specific need.

**5.7.1.2** Young trees that will not tolerate repetitive

pruning and have the potential to outgrow their space should be considered for relocation or removal.

#### 5.7.1.3 At planting

**5.7.1.3.1** Pruning should be limited to cleaning (5.6.1).

**5.7.1.3.2** Branches should be retained on the lower trunk.

#### 5.7.1.4 Once established

**5.7.1.4.1** Cleaning should be performed (5.6.1).

**5.7.1.4.2** Rubbing and poorly attached branches should be removed.

**5.7.1.4.3** A central leader or leader(s) as appropriate should be developed.

**5.7.1.4.4** A strong, properly spaced scaffold branch structure should be selected and maintained.

**5.7.1.4.5** Interfering branches should be reduced or removed.

#### 5.7.2 Espalier

**5.7.2.1** Branches that extend outside the desired plane of growth shall be pruned or tied back.

**5.7.2.2** Ties should be replaced as needed to prevent girdling the branches at the attachment site.

#### 5.7.3 Pollarding

**5.7.3.1** Consideration shall be given to the ability of the individual tree to respond to pollarding.

**5.7.3.2** Management plans shall be made prior to the start of the pollarding process for routine removal of watersprouts.

**5.7.3.3** Internodal cuts shall be made at specific locations to start the pollarding process. After the initial cuts are made, no additional internodal cut shall be made.

**5.7.3.4** Watersprouts growing from the cut ends of branches (knuckles) should be removed annually during the dormant season.

**5.7.4 Restoration**

**5.7.4.1** Restoration shall consist of selective pruning to improve the structure, form, and appearance of trees that have been severely headed, vandalized, or damaged.

**5.7.4.2** Location in tree, size range of parts, and percentage of watersprouts to be removed should be specified.

**5.7.5 Vista pruning**

**5.7.5.1** Vista pruning shall consist of selective pruning to allow a specific view.

**5.7.5.2** Size range of parts, location in tree, and percentage of foliage to be removed should be specified.

**5.8 Palm pruning**

**5.8.1** Palm pruning should be performed when fronds, fruit, or loose petioles may create a dangerous condition.

**5.8.2** Live healthy fronds, initiating at an angle of 45 degrees or greater from horizontal, with frond tips at or below horizontal, should not be removed.

**5.8.3** Fronds removed should be severed close to the petiole base without damaging living trunk tissue.

**5.8.4** Palm peeling (shaving) should consist of the removal of only the dead frond bases at the point they make contact with the trunk without damaging living trunk tissue.

**5.9 Utility pruning****5.9.1 General**

**5.9.1.1** The purpose of utility pruning is to prevent the loss of service, comply with mandated clearance laws, prevent damage to equipment, avoid access impairment, and uphold the intended usage of the facility/utility space.

**5.9.1.2** Only a qualified line clearance arborist or line clearance arborist trainee shall be assigned to line clearance work in accordance with ANSI Z133.1, 29 CFR 1910.331 – 335, 29 CFR 1910.268 or 29 CFR 1910.269.

**5.9.1.3** Utility pruning operations are exempt from requirements in 5.1 Tree Inspection:

**5.1.1** *An arborist or arborist trainee shall visually inspect each tree before beginning work.*

**5.1.2** *If a condition is observed requiring attention beyond the original scope of the work, the condition should be reported to an immediate supervisor, the owner, or the person responsible for authorizing the work.*

**5.9.1.4** Safety inspections of the work area are required as outlined in ANSI Z133.1 4.1.3, *job briefing*.

**5.9.2 Utility crown reduction pruning****5.9.2.1 Urban/residential environment**

**5.9.2.1.1** Pruning cuts should be made in accordance with 5.3, Pruning cuts. The following requirements and recommendations of 5.9.2.1.1 are repeated from 5.3 Pruning cuts.

**5.9.2.1.1.1** A pruning cut that removes a branch at its point of origin shall be made close to the trunk or parent limb, without cutting into the branch bark ridge or collar, or leaving a stub (see Figure 5.3.2).

**5.9.2.1.1.2** A pruning cut that reduces the length of a branch or parent stem should bisect the angle between its branch bark ridge and an imaginary line perpendicular to the branch or stem (see Figure 5.3.3).

**5.9.2.1.1.3** The final cut shall result in a flat surface with adjacent bark firmly attached.

**5.9.2.1.1.4** When removing a dead branch, the final cut shall be made just outside the collar of living tissue.

**5.9.2.1.1.5** Tree branches shall be removed in such a manner so as not to cause damage to other parts of the tree or to other plants or property. Branches too large to support with one hand shall be precut to avoid splitting of the wood or tearing of the bark (see Figure 5.3.2). Where necessary, ropes or other equipment shall be used to lower large branches or portions of branches to the ground.

**5.9.2.1.1.6** A final cut that removes a branch

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with a narrow angle of attachment should be made from the bottom of the branch to prevent damage to the parent limb (see Figure 5.3.7).

**5.9.2.1.2** A minimum number of pruning cuts should be made to accomplish the purpose of facility/utility pruning. The natural structure of the tree should be considered.

**5.9.2.1.3** Trees directly under and growing into facility/utility spaces should be removed or pruned. Such pruning should be done by removing entire branches or by removing branches that have laterals growing into (or once pruned, will grow into) the facility/utility space.

**5.9.2.1.4** Trees growing next to, and into or toward facility/utility spaces should be pruned by reducing branches to laterals (5.3.3) to direct growth away from the utility space or by removing entire branches. Branches that, when cut, will produce watersprouts that would grow into facilities and/or utility space should be removed.

**5.9.2.1.5** Branches should be cut to laterals or the parent branch and not at a pre-established clearing limit. If clearance limits are established, pruning cuts should be made at laterals or parent branches outside the specified clearance zone.

### **5.9.2.2 Rural/remote locations – mechanical pruning**

Cuts should be made close to the main stem, outside of the branch bark ridge and branch collar. Precautions should be taken to avoid stripping or tearing of bark or excessive wounding.

### **5.9.3 Emergency service restoration**

During a utility-declared emergency, service must be restored as quickly as possible in accordance with ANSI Z133.1, 29 CFR 1910.331 – 335, 29 CFR 1910.268, or 29 CFR 1910.269. At such times it may be necessary, because of safety and the urgency of service restoration, to deviate from the use of proper pruning techniques as defined in this standard. Following the emergency, corrective pruning should be done as necessary.

**Annex A**  
(informative)

**Reference publications**

International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). 1995. *Tree Pruning Guidelines*. Savoy, IL: International Society of Arboriculture (ISA).