

Expert Resources

For more information about caring for your trees and brochures that explain proper tree pruning and tree selection in greater detail, contact one of these organizations:

Trees Virginia
treesvirginia.org

Virginia Department of Forestry
dof.virginia.gov

ISA Find an Arborist
treesaregood.org/findanarborist

Mid-Atlantic Chapter- International Society of Arboriculture
mac-isa.org

Tree Care Industry Association
tcia.org

International Society of Arboriculture
isa-arbor.com

American National Standards Institute (ANSI)
www.isa-arbor.com/store/product/124/cid/40/

Pruning Best Management Practices (ANSI supplement)
www.isa-arbor.com/store/product/58/cid/40/

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THE ONLY THING
Tree Topping
Reduces Is Your
Property Value



Tree topping is a sure way to kill a tree long before its natural life is over. The “Experts Agree, Don’t Top Your Tree” campaign aims to inform the public about the hazards of tree topping and to provide better alternatives to this destructive practice.

What is Tree Topping?

Tree topping is the drastic removal or cutting back of large tree branches. It is usually done to correct a tree that is outgrowing its space and creates large, open wounds.

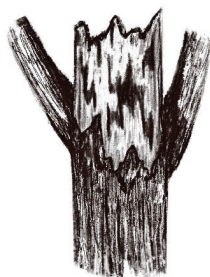
The multiple branch wounds provide open access to decay organisms and insects that the tree cannot defend against. The reduction in leaf surface also damages the root system, reducing the tree's ability to absorb nutrients and water that it needs to properly grow and develop.

The health of the tree begins to decline rapidly and ultimately results in premature death of other limbs and branches. The dead limbs can fall on you or your neighbor's house and damage other personal property.

A topped tree dies much sooner than it should, and it may be more costly and dangerous to remove than a tree that dies from natural causes.



Leaving a stub provides open access to decay organisms.



Shoots that grow below a topping cut are weakly attached and often become a hazard.

Tree Topping Theories Debunked

TOPPING TREES WILL NOT REDUCE STORM DAMAGE OR MAKE THEM EASIER TO MAINTAIN IN THE FUTURE.

The fast growing, long, and loosely-attached sucker sprouts that result from topping are more susceptible to breakage and storm damage. They will also regain their original height in as little as two years and will need to be repeatedly topped.

TOPPING WILL NOT INVIGORATE YOUR TREE.

Topping immediately injures a tree and leaves wounds that are prone to insect invasions, rot, and other health problems.

A TOPPED TREE WILL NOT ADD VALUE TO YOUR PROPERTY.

Topped trees can become hazardous very quickly and cause damage to property, making them a liability rather than an asset. Losing an asset always reduces property value.

An Ounce of Prevention – Right Tree Right Place

Every species has specific height, width, and spacing needs in order to grow into a healthy, mature tree. Carefully matching your tree selection with site conditions, such as proximity to other trees or structures, location of utilities, soil and ground conditions, and other considerations can prevent problems before they occur.

Prevention helps to avoid expensive, negative, and time consuming problems in the future. Many utility companies provide guidelines for planting trees that will fit your needs. After all, **“an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”**

Alternatives to Topping

Using best management practices to conduct proper pruning is an alternative method to topping. Proper pruning methods will maximize your tree's health while addressing your needs and desires for the tree. Proper pruning can be used as a technique to improve tree structure, mitigate risk, provide clearance, maintain tree health, manage tree size, enhance flower or fruit production, improve aesthetic, and more.

However, in order to be successful, pruning should be done by a professional arborist who will prune according to ANSI standards. ANSI standards are the industry consensus standards for the professional management of trees, shrubs, and other woody plants.

HIRING AN ARBORIST

The best way to hire a competent, trustworthy tree care professional is to find an individual or company that carries professional certification from the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) or Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA). ISA conducts important training courses and a rigorous certification exam. It is important to hire a professional who is both certified and insured. When seeking tree care service, if topping is offered by a company or individual, do not let them care for your trees. Never let yourself be pressured by bargains. The only way to truly get your money's worth is to have it done right the first time. See the resources page of the brochure to be directed to “How to Hire an Arborist” sites.



If the height of a tree must be reduced, all cuts should be made to strong laterals or to the parent limb. Do not cut limbs back to stubs.

By putting the right tree in the right place from the start, you can not only avoid the heartache of seeing a valuable tree destroyed before its time, but you can also avoid the unnecessary expenses involved with having trees repeatedly topped, only to eventually lose them.