

Prepare to Prune

December, January and the first part of February are the best time of year to prune trees. But before sharpening your chainsaw, think about what actually needs pruning. Pruning is done for three reasons: **safety, tree health and appearance.**



- **Pruning for safety** requires the pruning of poor branch structure. Narrow branch junctions that are V-shaped are structurally weak and should be removed. Long branches that have been repeatedly stripped of their lateral branches are also very weak and should be shortened or removed completely.
- **Tree health** is the second motive for pruning. Look for the “3-D” branches — dead, diseased and dying. These are a source of disease and insects, as well as a food source to attract more disease and insects. It’s important to remove them, but they may remain on the tree for a short time since they pose no immediate threat to life and limb.
- **Pruning for appearance** often leads to overzealous removal of what the tree needs most: green leaves. Eliminating the means of food production, i.e. photosynthesis, will inevitably harm the tree’s long term health. Loss of foliage results in loss of food reserves to fight off pests.

Finally, never cut through the branch collar and always paint fresh wounds on oak trees to prevent Oak Wilt.