

## Tree Pruning in Urban Area: Part 2

In my former article on pruning I mentioned that there are two types of pruning; heading which is the indiscriminate cutting of branches back to the same level while thinning refers to the removal of selected branches within the canopy back to the main trunk, a side branch, or bud. Shearing hedges into a formal shape is an example of heading. For example on liriope, it's a common practice to set the lawnmower at the highest wheel setting and mow off the previous year's growth at the end of winter. It is important to note that many woody ornamentals in the landscape such as a crape myrtle, are pruned using a combination of thinning and heading cuts. Selective thinning is done to remove branches growing inward, branches rubbing other branches, and generally to open up the canopy. Then, a few heading cuts are done back to a side branch or bud to maintain form and balance of the canopy.

An extreme form of heading is called renewal pruning. This is sometimes done on established broadleaf evergreen shrubs that have grown too large for their location. Renewal pruning involves cutting back the main trunk and branches to within 8 to 12 inches of ground level. Please bear in mind that certain landscape plants do not respond well to renewal pruning. Conifers, including pine, spruce and juniper, are not capable of forming new growth from old wood. If you prune these plants back to old wood, a lower branch will try to become dominant, but no new growth will form adjacent to the cut.

Making the right cut- When pruning back to a bud, prune just above the bud at a slight angle. The reason for the angle is so water will be sure to run off and not stand on the cut surface and promote wood decay. Avoid leaving too wide an angle when making the cut because it provides a wider surface area for disease infection. Buds produce auxin that promote wound healing, and when the wound is too far from the bud, the effect of auxin on wound healing is reduced.

When removing a large branch from a tree, a jump cut is recommended to avoid ripping and tearing of the bark on the main trunk. This involves making 3 separate cuts. First, make an upward cut about 1/3 of the way through the branch, 1 to 2 feet from the main trunk. A second cut is made downward several inches beyond the first cut. The weight of the branch will cause the branch to break back to the first cut. Then, when the weight of the branch is eliminated and a stump remains, a third cut can be made just outside the swollen area, called the "branch collar", where the branch joins the main trunk. Adding paint to the cut surface is not beneficial.

Remember the rule; prune spring flowering plants after they bloom and prune summer flowering plants after new growth begins.

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