

## Archive for February, 2009

### Managing Storm Damage

Sunday, February 1st, 2009

After 50 years of being a forester, it still amazes me when I think about what a tree has to endure in order to reach its full potential. It's a marvel of nature, especially, when one considers the fact that mature trees are usually the oldest living things around. From the time a tiny seedling first pushes its way out of the soil and into the "great outdoors," it is in danger of being destroyed or severely stressed at every turn. Fastened in one place, unable to move to more hospitable climes, a tree's struggle is incessant and severe. At no time is that struggle more severe than when a storm strikes.

Snow, ice, tornadoes, hail, and hurricane-like winds are some of the natural perils trees face. Cleaning up after a storm strikes can be a bewildering experience, especially when the storm also knocks out electrical service over a broad swath of countryside. Getting the power back on is, of course, the first priority, and is the province of the utility companies and/or local government. However, once this initial recovery step is completed, it then becomes the responsibility of everyone to deal with the damage to trees and other infrastructure (e.g. lost shingles, broken windows, etc.).

With regard to trees, some of the injured can be treated to maintain their health and value, while others should be removed/replaced. Dealing with tree damage doesn't have to be done as soon as possible after the storm. Be patient. If a damaged tree doesn't present an immediate hazard, take time to figure out the best way to care for the tree. Often damage is relatively minor, with only the smallest branches of the tree being injured. One may need professional help in deciding what can be done; which trees can be saved, which should be removed, what kind of treatments will need to be applied, where to find help, etc. In addition, many homeowner insurance policies may cover at least part of the cost of tree care, so check with your carrier before starting any tree work. In general, here are some steps to follow in managing storm damage to trees:

1. Assess the damage – try to determine if the tree can be saved at all, and, if so, what needs to be done to help the tree recover its vigor.
2. Don't rush things. Much of the damage to trees occurs after the storm, when improper pruning, or tree topping, actually create more of a problem than did the storm. NEVER TOP TREES!
3. Don't take on more than your skill level allows! You may have to hire professional help if you want to get a good job done. Don't just hire anyone to work on your trees. Use an experienced, certified arborist, who carries, and can prove, workers compensation and liability insurance. Ask for local references, and check them out.
4. Learn what you can do to reduce tree damage in future storms.  
There are many sources of information about dealing with storm damage to trees. Two of the best are listed below, and I recommend them highly:

1. **Tree Care After Storms** – a free publication (8 pp. brochure) from the Missouri Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102.

2. **When A Storm Strikes** – Tree City USA Bulletin No. 2. Available from the National Arbor Day Foundation, 211 N. 12th St., Lincoln, NE 68508. Cost is \$3.00, but well worth it.

For additional assistance/advice, contact your local Missouri Department of Conservation office, or surf the Departments web site at : [www. MissouriConservation.org](http://www.MissouriConservation.org).

### **After The Storm: Can The Tree Be Saved?**

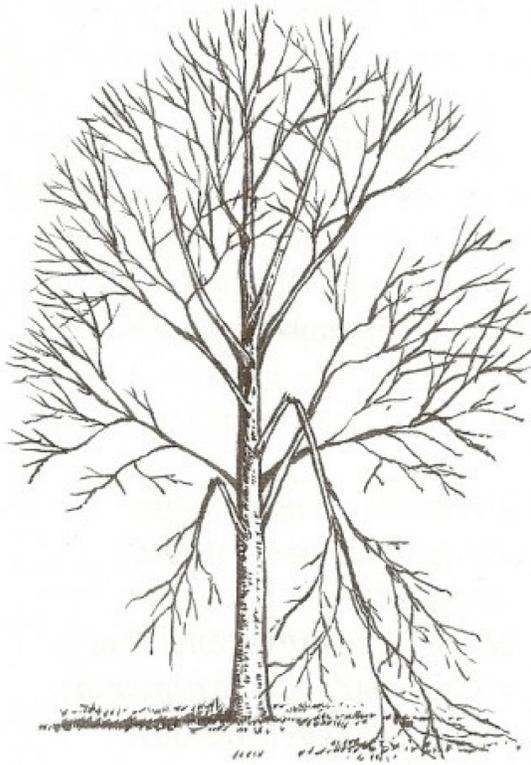
Sunday, February 8th, 2009

Well.....the storm is over, the electricity is on, you're warm, and the coffee is brewing. You look out the window, and start thinking about what you can/should do about the storm damaged trees in your yard. First, be patient. If a tree doesn't present any further immediate hazard, take the time to figure out the best way to care for the injured tree.

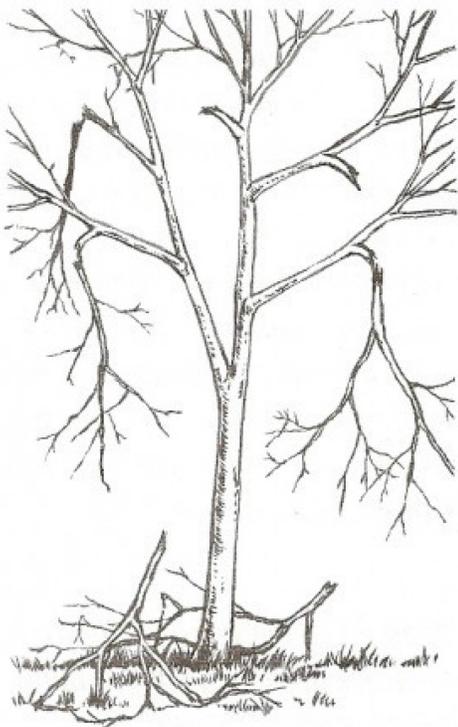
Assess the situation. Often damage is relatively minor with only a few small branches broken. Usually injury of this magnitude results in little or no permanent damage to the tree, and can be easily corrected with light pruning; removing loose or loosely attached branches. However, be careful and avoid over pruning.

If the damage is more severe, such as large broken branches, split trunks, etc., ask yourself, "Given the condition, is it worth saving the tree?" Some trees are simply not worth saving, and should be removed. In general, remove a tree that: has lost more than 50% of its crown, has a split trunk, or has already been weakened by disease. Trees that have been tipped into a leaning position have usually experienced severe root breakage, and should be removed to prevent future risks to property and people.

In general, save a tree only if 50% or more of the crown remains intact, and, if once repairs are made, the tree will be attractive and of value. Other factors to consider are the trees age, species, location, and sentimental value. Once you consider all the factors, it may be more desirable to replace the tree than repair it. However, if a valuable tree appears to be a borderline case, resist the temptation to simply cut it down and be done with it. Remember, time is on your side. After carefully pruning broken branches, give the tree time to recover. A final decision can be made later. If you are not sure about what to do, seek the advice of a local arborist, urban forester, or professional tree service.

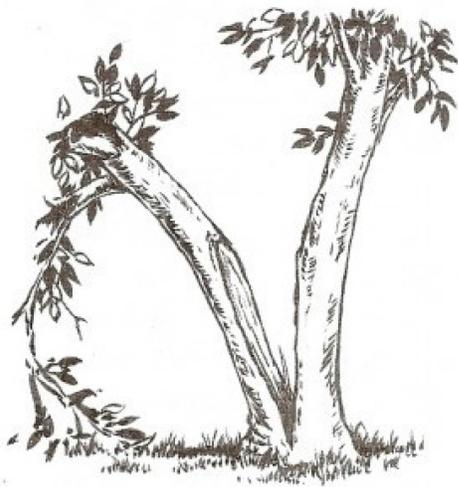


*When the damage is limited to a few small branches, light pruning is usually all that is needed.*



*After carefully pruning broken branches, give the tree time to recover. Often new foliage will return the tree to its natural beauty. If not, the decision to remove the tree can always be made later.*

*A tree that loses  
50 percent or  
more of its  
crown should be  
removed.*



*Trees with split trunks have been  
severely weakened and should  
be removed.*

## Pruning Reminder

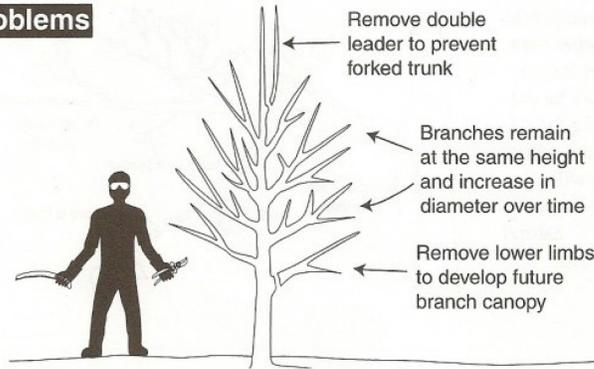
Saturday, February 14th, 2009

Late winter (now) is probably the best time of the year to conduct needed pruning of landscape trees. So, get out the pruning saw, or go buy one if you haven't got one, and get out there and get to work. I've included some drawings below to remind you how to make the various cuts during the pruning process. Now, excuse me. I saw an errant branch on the Shumard oak in my backyard that needs to go.

Good luck and have a good time out there. (Click on each image to enlarge for better reading).

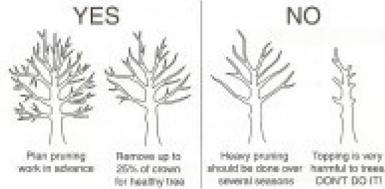
### Prune Now; Avoid Future Problems

Use simple hand-pruning tools when a tree is young to prevent future structural problems and the need to remove large limbs later in its life. It is especially important to remove forked tops (double leaders), and to gradually remove lower branches for shade-tree development.



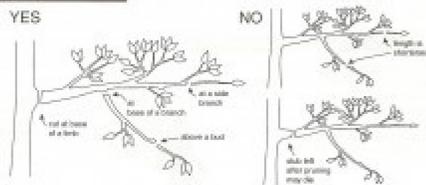
#### Don't Overprune

It is best to remove only a small percentage of the live part of a tree at one time—a maximum of 25 percent in one year for healthy, vigorous trees. This will help maintain a balance between leaf area and other tree functions. Prune weak or declining trees less. Severe pruning may stimulate undesirable sprouting from the stem or roots. Avoid pruning over 25 percent of the live crown of any tree two years in succession.



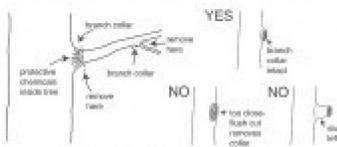
#### Remove Whole Limbs or Branches

It is preferable to remove an entire limb or branch rather than to shorten its length. Branches may be cut back to a twig, or ridge to a bud, where new growth will resume. This technique respects natural growth patterns.



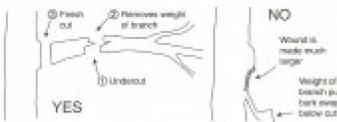
#### Save Branch Collars

Trees produce natural chemicals to prevent decay from entering the tree at the base of each branch or limb. To preserve this chemical zone, leave the slight swelling, or branch collar, at the branch base. The resulting wound will be smaller than if the branch were cut flush. This rule applies to large limbs and small branches.



#### Use the Three-Cut Method

Branches one inch in diameter or larger should generally be removed in a series of three cuts. This will prevent bark attached to the base of the cut branch from stripping away back on the trunk as it falls.



## **Planting Time Coming**

Sunday, February 22nd, 2009

It won't be long before spring arrives about March 20 or 21. Of course, in the spring, a young mans fancy turns to thoughts of.....PLANTING TREES !!!!!!!!!!!

Yes, we've spent the days since last fall studying what to plant (species selection), and where to plant (right tree, right place), etc. Soon, the time will be upon us to go find that "simply wonderful oak" that we want to adorn the landscape around our homestead. Again, to be planted in the right place; with room to grow, a safe distance from overhead power lines, etc. Plus, we have several places of business in the area that will have "simply wonderful," so we should be able to get a good buy for the cash we have budgeted. We can hardly wait until the Handy Dandy Garden Center announces that they have fresh stocks ready for planting. We are ready! There's nothing left but the planting!

But.....said the old man, philosophically, do you know how to select the best "simply wonderful" once you see it at the tree lot? What? Aren't they all alike? And the O.M. answers, "maybe; maybe not?" Selecting the right individual tree to plant, from the dozens sitting at the garden center, can be critical to getting the best quality tree, so it will stand the best chance of doing well once it is outplanted.

In general, the following factors should be considered when purchasing trees to plant. Whether trees are balled and burlapped, potted, container grown, or bare rooted, purchased trees should have these desirable characteristics:

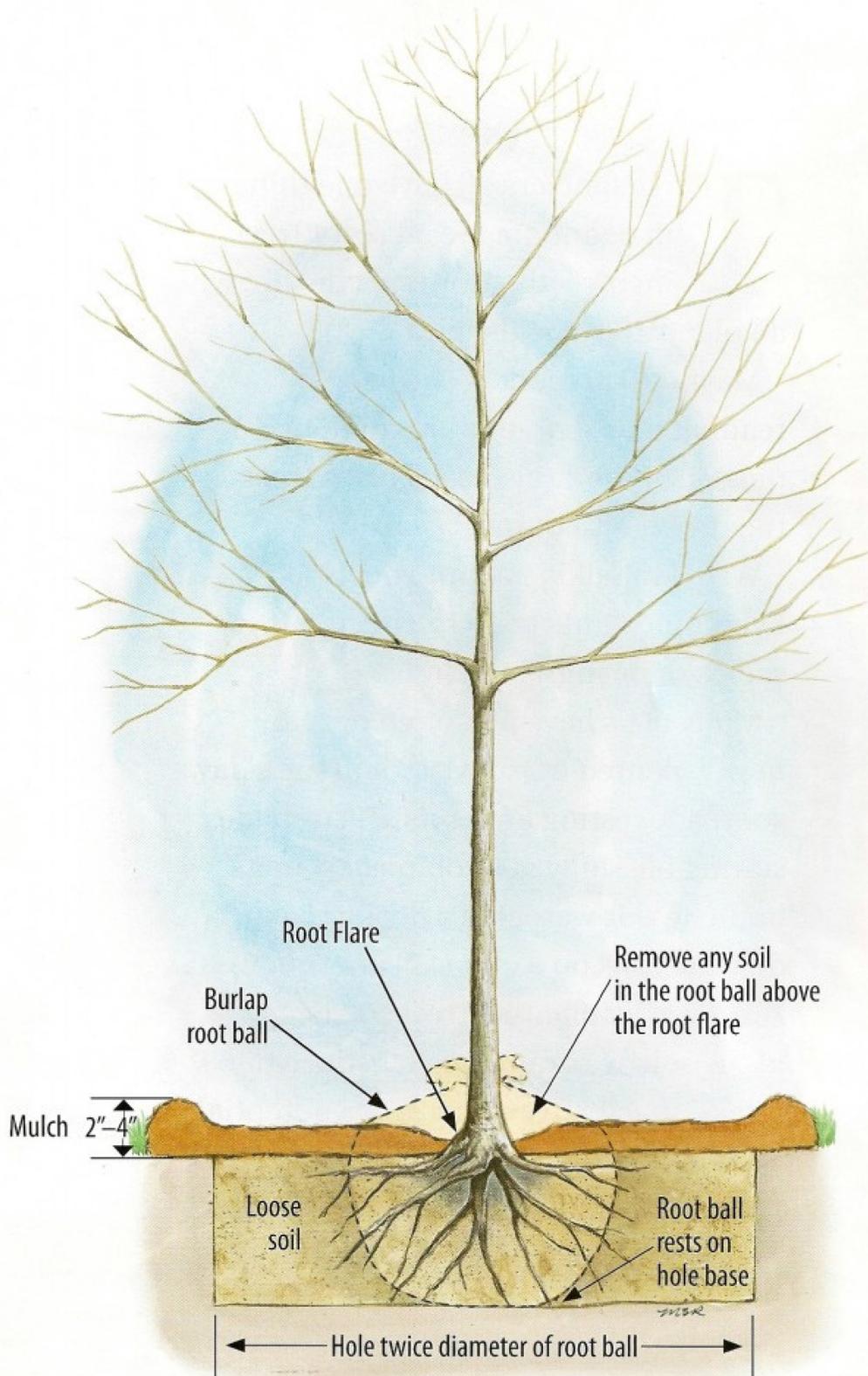
1. Long, vigorous branches on current year's growth. Well developed buds.
2. Pleasing proportion of height to spread. Well developed lateral branches.
3. Generally, straight trunk, with absence of wounds.
4. Firm, moist root ball or container soil. Bare root seedlings should have roots protected by wrappings, and be moist (not overly wet) with a good number of undamaged, healthy-looking fine roots.

Lastly, realize that relative prices of trees generally indicate quality, but not always. Tree costs depend on size, root condition, species, method of growth or culture, and origin. Buy the best quality plant you can afford, and buying from a reputable dealer with certified nurseryman credentials is always a good idea.

## **Planting Techniques**

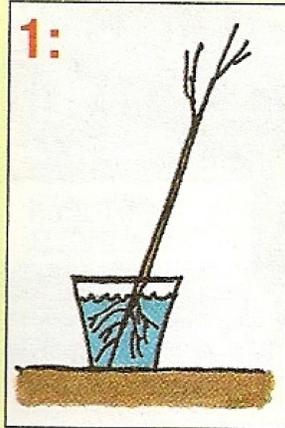
Saturday, February 28th, 2009

Before you begin spring planting, it might be a good idea to review the basic techniques for planting trees. Posted below are several diagrams that depict the proper techniques for various types of planting stock.

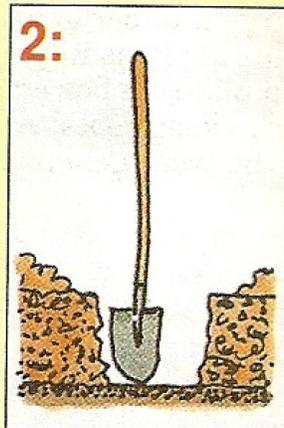


## Planting Bare-Root Trees

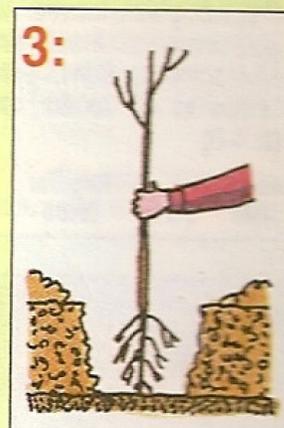
It is best to plant bare-root trees immediately, in order to keep the fragile roots from drying out. If you can't plant because of weather or soil conditions, store the trees in a cool place and keep the roots moist.



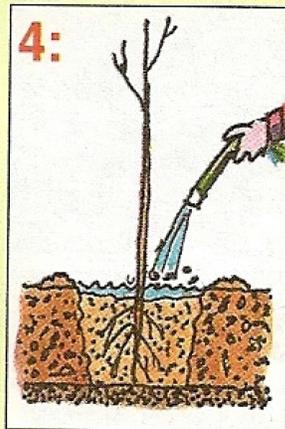
1: Unpack tree and soak in water 3 to 6 hours. Do not plant with packing material attached to roots and do not allow roots to dry out.



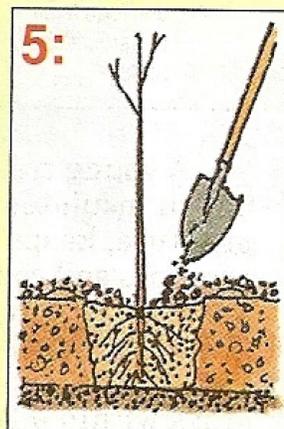
2: Dig a hole, wider than seems necessary, so the roots can spread without crowding. Remove any grass within a 3-foot circular area. To aid root growth, turn soil in an area up to 3 feet in diameter.



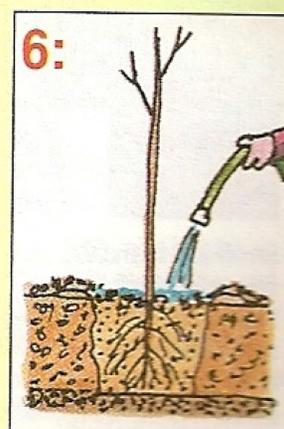
3: Plant the tree at the same depth it stood in the nursery, without crowding the roots. Partially fill the hole, firming the soil around the lower roots. Do not add soil amendments, such as peat or bark.



4: Shovel in the remaining soil. It should be firmly but not tightly packed. Construct a water-holding basin around the tree. Give the tree plenty of water.



5: After the water has soaked in, place a 2-inch deep protective mulch in an area 3 feet in diameter around the base of the tree (but not touching the trunk.)



6: During dry weather, generously water the tree every week or 10 days during the first year. Water slowly at the dripline.