

Archive for July, 2010

More On Tree Values

Monday, July 5th, 2010

Last time, I talked a little bit about the value of trees in the urban environment, noting that the greatest values of trees are the environmental benefits provided by the stately denizens. Right after I posted that blog, the July (2010) issue of the *Missouri Conservationist* Magazine published an article entitled “Street Trees Pay Us Back,” by Bill Graham and Helene Miller. In their article, they talk about how street trees not only provide environmental benefits, but they also report on how these benefits translate into *economic value*. I recommend the article to anyone interested in finding out how the economic benefits are calculated in the Kansas City area, and why the authors were inspired to say “It’s as if our urban trees were growing dollar bills instead of leaves.” Some of the information is truly mind boggling. The value of trees varies from place to place, but the 415,000 trees growing on city rights-of-way in Kansas City provide an average benefit of \$123 per tree, or more than \$51 million annually! North Kansas City averages about \$190 per tree per year, while Liberty averages about \$90 per tree per year due to smaller tree sizes overall and many that are just recovering from severe storm damage a few years back.

Some other fascinating findings in the article are:

1. Street trees that shade asphalt pavement can save a city up to 60% on road maintenance costs over 30 years.
2. Cars parked in the shade pollute the air less than vehicles parked in the open. The article explains why.
3. Tree-lined streets increase public safety. Studies show that drivers will slow down by up to 15 mph when driving such a thoroughfare because the trees make them think the street is narrower even when it’s not.

The article covers many more benefits and what they are worth in economic terms. Check it out. If you’re not a subscriber, *The Conservationist* can be found in the nearest public library, or can be viewed online at MDC’s website: MissouriConservation.org. You can also subscribe online, and *The Conservationist* is free to Missouri households.

Check out this tag placed on one of the KC study trees outlined by Graham and Miller. It was a project done in conjunction with The Heartland Tree Alliance; just one of the organizations extolling the virtues, and benefits, of trees in the urban environment. Pretty illuminating, eh?



Pruning Young Shade Trees

Wednesday, July 21st, 2010

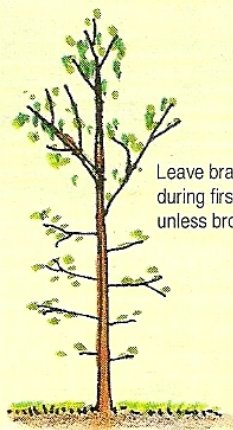
How you prune a shade tree during its first few years will have a profound effect on its shape, strength, and life span. Proper pruning during the early years will save you money, and produce safer, healthier, more beautiful, and easier-to-maintain trees. Keys to proper pruning are:

1. Prune early in the life of a tree, but don't start until the third year or so, unless there are broken limbs or twigs that need removal immediately.
2. Identify the best leader and lateral branches before you begin pruning, and remove any defective parts before pruning to form.
3. Keep pruning tools sharp. A clean cut assures faster healing of the pruning cut.
4. Prune with an eye to the future:
 - a. Remember that a branch does not move up the trunk as a tree grows. A branch 5' off the ground now will still be 5' off the ground ten years from now – only thicker and longer than it is now.
 - b. Try to visualize the future shape that is desired and prune limbs that won't fit that shape.
 - c. Remove branches that will cause an obvious problem in the future (e.g. a double leader).
 - d. Prune as lightly as possible, and only when there is good reason to prune.

- e. Never remove more than one-fourth of a tree's crown in one season.

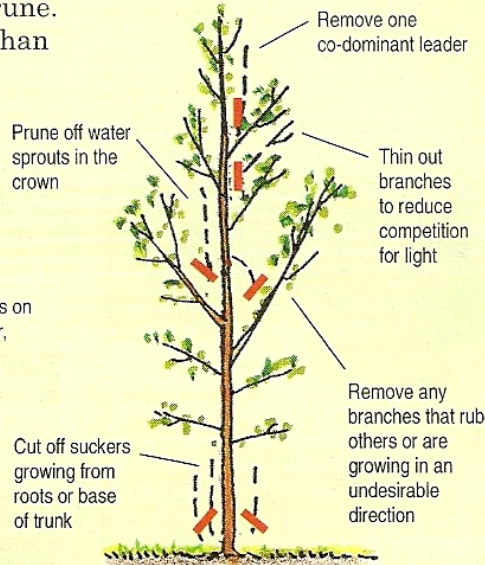
Prune with an eye to the future

As you prune, remember that the branches do not move up the trunk as the tree grows. A branch 5 feet from the ground now will be 5 feet off the ground in 10 years—only thicker and longer than it is now. Try to visualize what a particular branch will look like later, and remove any branches that will cause an obvious problem. Prune shade trees as lightly as possible and only when there is a good reason to prune. Never remove more than one-fourth of a tree's crown in a season.



Leave branches on during first year, unless broken

Tree as planted



Prune off water sprouts in the crown

Cut off suckers growing from roots or base of trunk

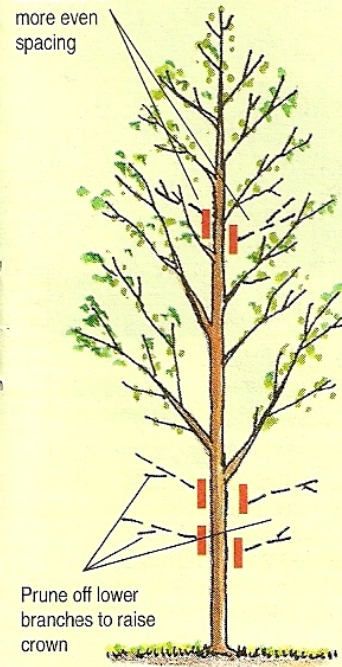
Remove one co-dominant leader

Thin out branches to reduce competition for light

Remove any branches that rub others or are growing in an undesirable direction

By age 3-4 years

Thin out branches for more even spacing



Prune off lower branches to raise crown

By age 5-7 years