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Selecting A Good Tree To Plant

Wednesday, April 3rd, 2013

No matter what species of tree you decide to plant in your landscape, it is important to select the highest quality specimen you can find at the nursery or garden center. It doesn't do much good to plant a poorly-developed, or injured tree that has been mistreated at the nursery or during handling at a garden center. Pictured below is an illustration that provides guidance for selecting a good individual specimen.

Select a high quality tree at the nursery

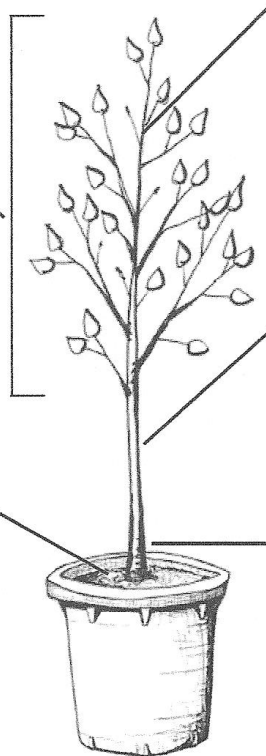
Crown height should be at least 60 percent of the total tree height for deciduous trees, 75 percent for evergreens.

One central leader is ideal. If not present, make sure that it can easily be pruned to one leader.

The bark should be free of scrapes or cracks (remove trunk wrap to check underneath).

There should not be more than 4 inches of soil over the roots. Use a metal kabob skewer or other heavy wire to push through the soil to find the depth to the first roots (roots that are at least as big around as a pencil).

The trunk should be centered in the soil and should not move independently of the root ball.



Now, let's go out and plant something.....but make it a high quality specimen!

Pruning Young Shade Trees

Thursday, April 25th, 2013

Pruning limbs or branches from shade trees can be done almost anytime, as long as it is done properly. In general, however, the sooner you can start pruning a young tree, the better chance you (and the tree) have in attaining the proper shape and growth habit that you desire. The following illustration depicts basic guidance for pruning young shade trees.

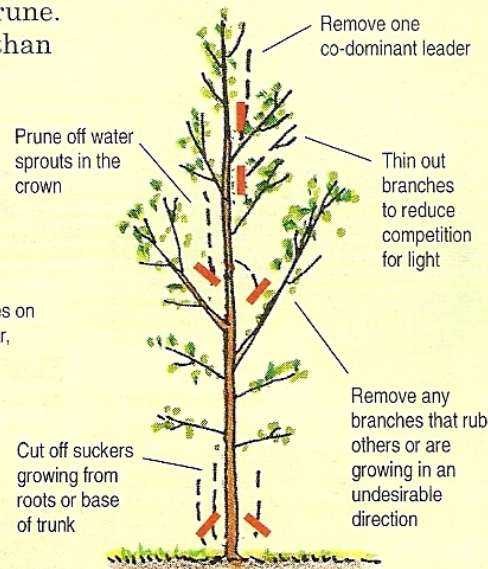
Prune with an eye to the future

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.



Tree as planted

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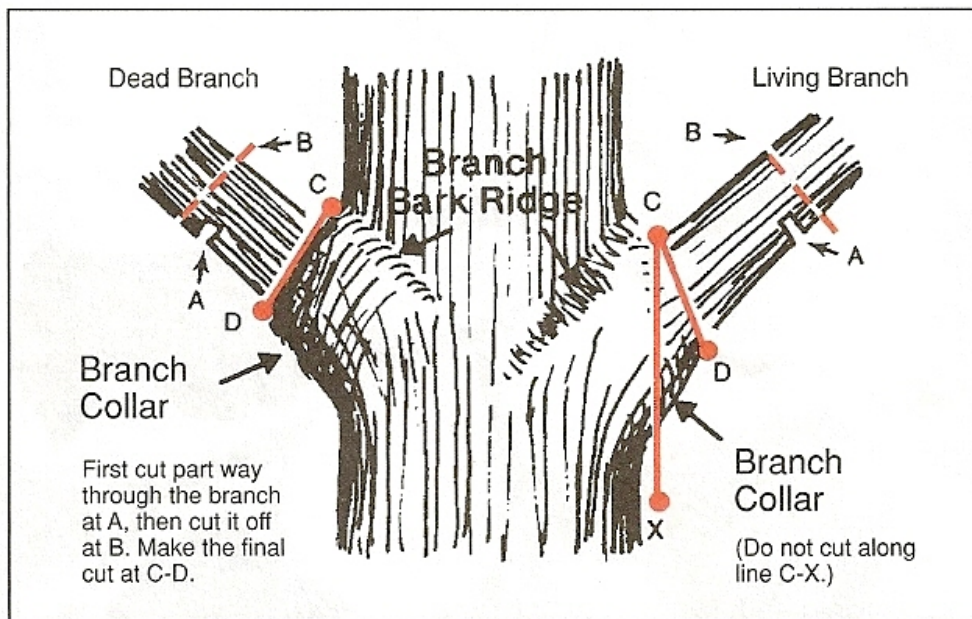


By age 3-4 years



By age 5-7 years

Also, don't forget how to make a proper pruning cut. The next illustration depicts that proper method.



Whether pruning a live or dead branch, it is important to make the pruning cut just outside the tree's branch bark ridge and branch collar. This facilitates natural sealing that helps the tree defend against decay.