

Archive for January, 2014

Some Random Thoughts on Tree Care in Winter

Monday, January 27th, 2014

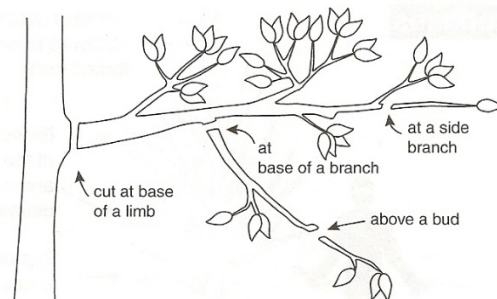
Some folks may think that there isn't much care to be done for trees in the winter. Hey! They're dormant! Why do we have to be concerned now? Well.....let's see.....

One effective action that can be done in the winter is to inspect the crowns of deciduous species to see what potential problems may be lurking "up there" where it's difficult to see when the leaves are in full bloom. Dead limbs or branches can be identified and removed much more easily than in the summer. Similarly, broken branches and twigs that aren't dead can be repaired through proper pruning so they are ready to begin the healing process quickly after bud break in the spring. Just make sure that you follow the recommendations for making proper pruning cuts to avoid further damage to the branch or twig once the regrowth begins. A reminder of proper technique(s) is shown in the following illustration:

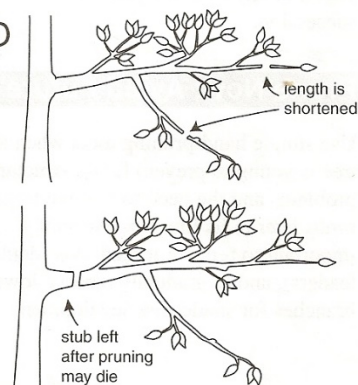
Remove Whole Limbs or Branches

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 twigs to a bud, where new growth will resume. This technique respects natural growth patterns.

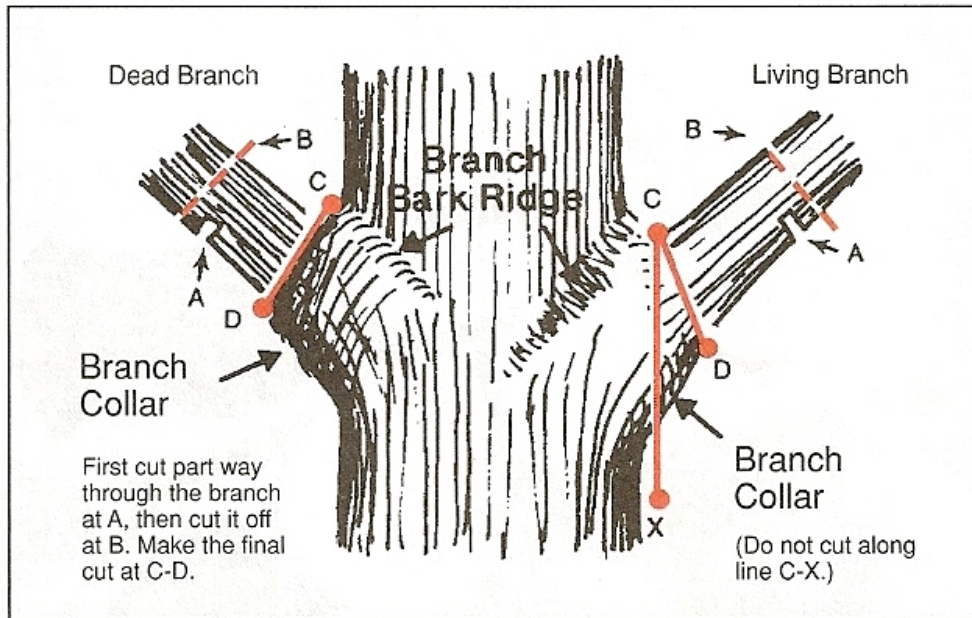
YES



NO



And don't forget how to make a pruning cut:



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.

Another good winter tree care action is to minimize ice melting agents on driveways and sidewalks where the runoff from the melting will be concentrated around tree roots. Use the products that have low salt ingredients as much as possible.

Don't pour hot water on tree branches to melt ice or snow from the tops. If there is no breakage of limbs or branches, Mother Nature and the tree are perfectly capable of removing the ice in a manner that allows the tree to recover from any stress that might have occurred.

Check the mulch pile and add some if necessary. This should actually have been done in the late fall, but add some now if harsh winds have blown some away, or mulch-eating other "things" have removed some of the trees best friend.

On the nicer days (yes, there are some occasionally – even this year) get outside and walk among your trees to check them for anything out of the ordinary that may be impacting them and/or their space.

Finally, now is the time to be planning for any new or replacement plantings that need to be made in your home landscape. Measure and evaluate your available spaces, look into species selection and availability in your area, and make sure you have tools (or a contractor) available to do the planting once the ground is ready. Don't forget to budget for and acquire any additional supplies needed (like mulch) for the work. Your objective should be to plant the right tree in the right place, and give it the best possible start you

can. Good planning now can make your planting job beneficial and pleasurable during the busy spring season.

