






## Eight Good Reasons Why NOT To "Top" Trees


 **Starvation:** Good pruning practices rarely remove more than 1/4 to 1/3 of the crown, which in turn does not seriously interfere with the ability of a tree's leafy crown to manufacture food. Topping removes so much of the crown that it upsets an older tree's well-developed crown-to-root ratio and temporarily cuts off its food-making ability.


 **Shock:** A tree's crown is like an umbrella that shields much of the tree from the direct rays of the sun. By suddenly removing this protection, the remaining bark tissue is so exposed that scalding may result. There may also be a dramatic effect on neighboring trees and shrubs. If these thrive in shade and the shade is removed, poor health or death may result.


 **Insects and Disease:** The large stubs of a topped tree have a difficult time forming callus. The terminal location of these cuts, as well as their large diameter, prevent the tree's chemically based natural defense system from doing its job. The stubs are highly vulnerable to insect invasion and the spores of decay fungi. If decay is already present in the limb, opening the limb will speed the spread of disease.

 **Weak Limbs:** At best, the wood of a new limb that sprouts after a larger limb is truncated is more weakly attached than a limb that develops more normally. If rot exists or develops at the severed end of the limb, the weight of the sprout makes a bad situation even worse.

 **Rapid New Growth:** The goal of topping is usually to control the height and spread of a tree. Actually, it has just the opposite effect. The resulting sprouts (often called *water sprouts*) are far more numerous than normal new growth and they elongate so rapidly that the tree returns to its original height in a very short time - and with a far denser crown.

 **Tree Death:** Some older trees are more tolerant to topping than others. Beeches, for example, do not sprout readily after severe pruning and the reduced foliage most surely will lead to death of the tree.

 **Ugliness:** A topped tree is a disfigured tree. Even with its growth it never regains the grace and character of its species. The landscape and the community are robbed of a valuable asset.

 **Cost:** Pruning properly and regularly, a light pruning every three years, will keep your tree in healthy condition. It will also have less drastic effects on both the landscape and your financial assets compared with neglecting older trees or resorting to topping.



The National  
Arbor Day Foundation

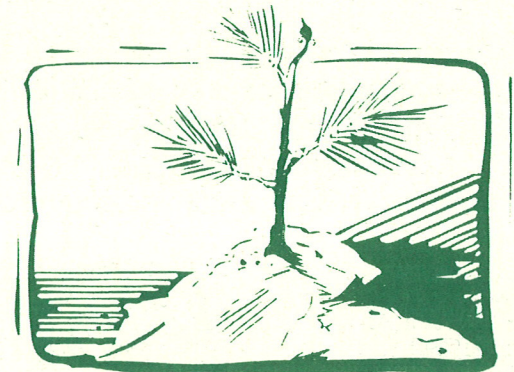
Proud recipient, 22 consecutive years, of the  
Tree City USA annual award.

Durango Parks & Recreation  
2700 Main Avenue  
Durango, Colorado 81301

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# City Certified Arborists and Tree Care Information



Forestry Division



## Forestry Bulletin

To the citizens of Durango:

*As spring approaches and thoughts of gardening, landscaping and other seasonal projects enter into your daily life, let us not forget the importance of planting new trees and pruning the young or more mature trees you may already have on your property. As a reminder to homeowners, the City of Durango requires companies or individuals that prune trees on private property to be licensed, city certified and to carry the appropriate insurance to work within the city limits of Durango. There are several local tree companies and individuals that can fulfill those needs. If you currently use a landscape company that provides pruning as a service, they need to meet the requirements of the City to prune your trees. Ask your company if they're city certified. Provided is a list of city certified arborists who can meet your tree care needs, or offer advice and direct you to professionals that can help.*

Ron Stoner,  
City Arborist

*The City of Durango is a member of  
The International Society of Arboriculture  
The National Arbor Day Foundation,  
and is recognized as a  
Tree City USA for 22 years and counting!*

## City Certified Arborists:

### City of Durango

Ron Stoner, City Arborist, Forestry Division  
2700 Main Ave., Durango, CO 81301  
970-385-2960 or 970-385-2961 • Fax 970-375-7337  
Planting & Pruning of trees on **public property**

### Animas Valley Arborist

Dave Temple  
613 County Road 213, Durango, CO 81301  
970-259-1055

### Doc Ricketts Tree Service

Lenny Ricketts  
683 Eagle Pass, Durango, CO 81301  
970-259-6269

### Heartwood West Tree Service

Tom Eskew  
1421 E. 2nd Ave., Durango, CO 81301  
970-247-4827 or 970-749-2874

### Top Notch Tree Service

Ralph Henderson  
PO Box 2358, Durango, CO 81302  
970-385-4217

### Fire Smart

Jon Westrup  
458 E. 3rd Ave., Durango, CO 81301  
970-759-3707

### Gardenhart

Dave Hart  
3146 W. 3rd Ave., Durango, CO 81301  
970-382-8828 or 970-749-1555

## Tree Care Information

### City of Durango

Ron Stoner, City Arborist, Forestry Division  
2700 Main Ave., Durango, CO 81301  
970-385-2960 or 970-385-2961 • Fax 970-375-7337

### Colorado State Forest Service

Dan Ochocki, District Forester  
PO Box 7233, Durango, CO 81301  
970-247-5250 • Fax: 970-247-5252  
e-mail: csfsdgo@rmi.net

### Colorado State University

Greg Vlaming, extension agent  
La Plata County Extension Office  
25th & Main Ave., PO Box 2607, Durango, CO 81301  
970-247-4355

### La Plata Electric Association

Sam Noble  
45 Stewart Dr., Durango, CO 81301  
970-385-3532

Tree maintenance in power-line right-of-ways.

## Tree Care Tips

Summertime in Durango is a busy season for people planting trees for their landscape. The City of Durango Forestry Division, in conjunction with the National Arbor Day Foundation, is offering important tree care tips to help your trees stay happy and healthy for years to come.

**1. Don't Top Trees!** Never cut main branches back to stubs. If necessary, cut them back to the trunk. Topping is detrimental to the health of the tree.

**2. Use the 1/3 Rules for Pruning.** Never remove more than 1/3 of a tree's crown. Encourage side branches that form angles that are 1/3 off vertical (10:00 or 2:00 positions). For most deciduous (broadleaf) trees, don't prune up from the bottom more than 1/3 the height of the tree.

**3. How to Make a Pruning Cut.** For large limbs, make a partial cut from beneath. Make a second cut from above several inches out and allow the limb to fall. Complete the job with a final cut just outside the branch collar.

**4. The Value of Mulch.** Mulch insulates soil, retains moisture, keeps out weeds, prevents solid compaction, reduces lawnmower damage, and adds an aesthetic touch. Mulch should be 2-4 inches deep, but not touching the trunk.

**5. Where Roots Really Grow.** Understand how and where your roots grow in order to avoid damage due to trenching and construction.

**6. Girdling Kills Trees.** Girdling is an activity that injures the bark of a tree trunk and extends around much of the trunk's circumference. The layers of the trunk conduct water and minerals from the roots to the leaves and return food produced by the leaves to the rest of the tree.

**7. How to Plant a Containerized Tree.** Ideally, dig or rototill an area one-foot deep and 5 times the diameter of the root ball. The prepared soil will encourage root growth and a healthier tree. Don't let the root ball dry out and vertically cut any roots that show tendencies to circle the root ball (girdling.) Always keep soil around the roots when planting. Pack soil firmly around the root ball then water. Place a protective 3-foot circle of mulch around the tree and firmly pack.

**8. How to Plant a Bare-root Tree.** Do not let roots dry out. Before planting, soak bare roots 6-12 hours. Dig a hole wider than root growth; Remove grass within a 3-foot circle. Plant trees the depth it stood at the nursery. Construct a water-holding basin and give tree plenty of water. Place a 2-inch protective mulch in area 3 feet in diameter around the base of the tree, but not touching the tree trunk. Water generously every 7 to 10 days during the first year.

