




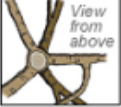
# Proper Dormant Pruning Tips, Tools & Techniques

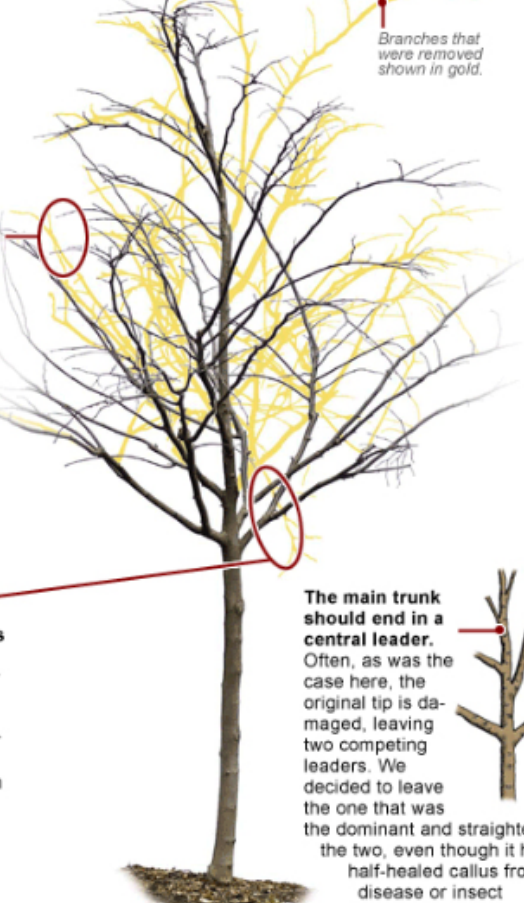
**GREEN  
IMPRESSIONS**

**1**  First, remove any branches that are obviously **broken, diseased or dead**. To test for vitality, scrape the bark with a knife (shown at right). If the underlying layer is green, the branch is alive.

**2**  Look for **branches that are rubbing against each other** or crossing and soon will be touching. Determine which of the two serves the tree better, and remove the other.

**3**  If one branch is **located immediately above another**, take out one of them. Uncorrected, the upper branch will shade out the other and make it weak.

**4**  *View from above*  
Cut side branches that are growing toward the center of the tree. In deciding what to remove, remember that branches with narrow crotch angles are structurally weaker than those with a wider junction.



*Branches that were removed shown in gold.*

**The main trunk should end in a central leader.** Often, as was the case here, the original tip is damaged, leaving two competing leaders. We decided to leave the one that was the dominant and straighter of the two, even though it had a half-healed callus from disease or insect damage.



**Thick work gloves** are a must to protect hands from blades and thorns.



**Pruners** are essential for the thinnest branches. They will cut stems of up to a half-inch.



**Loppers** are useful for branches ranging from a half-inch to an inch or more.



**A sharp pruning saw** is needed for the thickest branches and for precision cuts to leave branch collars.

## Pruning Multi-Stemmed Varieties

Not all trees have, or should have, central leaders. Multi-stemmed or low-branched, vase-shaped trees, such as the popular crape myrtle variety Natchez, are meant to have a number of trunks.

However, these trees grow large, dense and thick and benefit greatly from formative pruning. On this specimen (shown at right), we kept the three trunks but reduced the number of main branches from 13 to non and pruned the upper thicket branches.

We are guided by the principles outlined above. We will do more fine pruning the next two or three winters. Ultimately, we want a tree that forms an asymmetric silhouette and develops its own distinct character.

