

Tree Topping: The Truth

What is Topping?

Tree topping, also known as pollarding, stubbing, dehorning, rounding over, or heading; is the cutting and removal of healthy tree branches to reduce height.

It's not a viable method of height reduction, does not reduce the 'risk' associated with tree size, and may actually increase risk due to decay and rapid regrowth.

Decay

When pruned properly, trees have the ability to heal. When topped, trees suffer from multiple large wounds and are often unable to prevent fungi from entering them. This can severely weaken or kill the tree.

Rapid Regrowth & Hazards

Topping is thought to reduce height. However, to survive, trees produce numerous shoots below each topping cut. These shoots grow rapidly and can grow up to 20 feet in one year. Topped trees will grow back rapidly until they reach their original size, usually within two years.

Although the regrowth is quick, the new shoots are weaker and do not have the structural integrity of the original branches. This means they are prone to break and are particularly vulnerable during wind storms.

The 'Ugly Factor'

Trees grow into beautiful, natural shapes, providing habitats for animals and birds. When topped, trees look like ugly stubs. New shoots grow straight up giving the tree an unnatural form. Topped trees never regain their natural grace and beauty.

Expensive

Topping results in high-maintenance pruning in subsequent years to deal with the rapid regrowth and storm damage. If topping is truly successful, the tree will die and this will require additional funds to remove the tree.

There's another hidden cost associated with topping: curb appeal. Healthy, well-maintained trees can add 10 to 20 percent to the value of your property. Disfigured, topped trees are considered an impending expense.

Best Alternative

Consult and hire a professional arborist. They can determine the type of pruning necessary to maintain or improve the health, appearance and safety of your trees.



For more information
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