

## NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

### CONSTRUCTION SPECIFICATIONS

## TREE/SHRUB PRUNING

### 1. Scope

The work consists of removing all or parts of selected branches or leaders from trees and shrubs. This specification will be used to carry out this practice. Practice application will be documented in the technical notes and narrative statements in the conservation plan.

### 2. Pruning Recommendations

- Prune only on stands that have a site index of 55 or higher.
- Branches shall be removed close to main stem but avoid cutting through the bark ridge. Pruning is normally restricted to branches less than 2 inches in diameter.
- Remove no more than one-third of the live crown in any one pruning. The live crown should be pruned no more than 1/2 the total height.

#### Hardwoods (deciduous trees).

- Prune only high value species such as black walnut.
- Prune only crop trees (trees which are prospects for producing saw logs).
- In a stand of small trees, prune 200 to 250 trees per acre spaced 12 to 15 feet apart.
- In the second stage of pruning, with trees up to 10 inches diameter breast height (dbh), prune approximately 100 trees per acre spaced about 20 feet apart.
- In the third stage of pruning, with trees over 10 inches dbh, prune approximately 75 trees per acre spaced about 24 feet apart.
- Begin corrective pruning black walnut the second year after planting. For natural stands of black walnut and other hardwoods, prune before they reach 5 inches dbh.
- All pruning shall be done with hand pruners or pruning saws.
- The preferred pruning time is during the spring (January through March).
- Prune to develop a single, straight stem. Continue pruning until a clear log is obtained—at least 9 feet long.
- Badly deformed black walnut trees 4 inches or less in diameter should be cut off one-half inch above the ground and allowed to re-sprout. Trees must be cut during the dormant season.
- Preferably, live branches should be pruned before they reach 2 inches in diameter.

#### Conifers (evergreens).

- Give preference to pruning tolerant or intermediate species because their branches persist even in dense stands.
- Prune only crop trees. The number of trees to prune is the same as for hardwoods.
- Begin pruning when the trees are 3 to 5 inches dbh.
- Pruning may be done with hand or power saws, pruning shears, axe, pruning club, or pole saw.
- Pruning may be done at any time of the year.

- Prune to develop at least a 17-foot clear log.

### **Pruning (Shearing or Shaping) Christmas Trees.**

- Pruning is a necessary operation for adding quality to Christmas trees. It is a highly specialized procedure that varies with the desires of the grower. Generally, Christmas trees are pruned to achieve a compact, symmetrical, and balanced crown while maintaining a natural appearance.
- Begin pruning when the trees are about 3 feet tall and continue pruning each year until the tree is harvested.
- If the tree is forked, remove all but the best stem.
- Maintain one leader by removing all but the best one.
- Prune around the base to provide a handle of 5 to 8 inches.
- Cut branches close to the tree trunk but avoid cutting through the branch bark ridge.
- This pruning can be done any time during the year.
- Base pruning may be delayed until the time of harvest or done as a part of routine pruning.

### **Spruces and firs.**

- Most of the short-needled and/or single-needled evergreens have buds along their stems between whorls.
- Pruning can be done any time after the season's growth is complete.
- Pruning clippers, hedge shears, and shearing knives may be used.
- Make cuts just above a bud. Cuts on the terminal should be made at a 45-degree angle.
- Cut the leader back to the length desired, usually 10 to 15 inches, and cut the side whorls proportionately.

### **Pines.**

- Pines do not form buds along their stems between whorls, but if pruning is done at the right time, new terminal buds will form at the end of the shortened leader.
- Prune about the middle of the active growing period or when height growth is completed. Actual calendar date varies with species. (New needles will be nearly at right angles to the stem and the base of the stem will just be turning brown.)
- Pruning clippers and shearing knives may be used.
- Cut the terminal at a 45-degree angle. Cut it back to the length desired, usually 10 to 15 inches. The top whorl should be cut back to about one-third the terminal length and cut the other side whorls proportionately.

### **Pruning to Enhance the Beauty of an Area.**

- Any size limb may be removed, but do not remove more than one-half the tree's live crown in any one pruning.
- Tree height or width may be shortened by cutting branches back to where they fork with another branch.
- Cuts shall be close to the trunk or branch from which the branch is being removed, but avoid a scalloping cut.
- Large branches must be cut twice to prevent peeling or stripping of the bark.