

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE SPECIFICATION GUIDE SHEET**

**TREE/SHRUB PRUNING**

(Acre)

**CODE 660**

**Definition**

The removal of all or part of selected branches, leaders or roots from trees and shrubs

**Purpose**

- Improve the appearance of trees or shrubs, e.g., ornamental plants and Christmas trees.
- Improve the quality of wood products.
- Improve the production of plant products, e.g., nuts, fruits, boughs and tips.
- Reduce fire and/or safety hazards.
- Improve the growth and vigor of understory plants.
- Adjust the foliage and branching density or rooting length for other specific intents, such as wind and snow control, noise abatement, access control, and visual screens and managing competition.
- Improve health and vigor of woody plants e.g. disease, insect and injury management.
- Air quality protection

**Documentation**

All categories require the following design information (a MFS approved Woods WISE program “Project Plan” may be substituted in most cases).

1. Landowner and Design Preparer name and address
2. Property Location, including town and county, and NRCS Field Office

3. Practice name, code, justification, extent, estimated cost, and time schedule.
4. Description of specific work to be performed and its location and size, as well as written instructions for contractor and /or owner.
5. Description of layout and marking methods. Treatment areas and number of trees to be pruned will be estimated for each payment scenario.
6. Maps of property and practice locations, including a lat/long for boundary corners and practices.
7. Specifications for the protection of other natural resources including but not limited to water, soil, and wildlife and non-target plants.
8. The design shall also identify where and if recommended treatments also necessitate application for permits or variances from local, state or federal regulations.
9. The expected composition, stocking, growth and quality of the future or residual stand, and its susceptibility to further insect/disease will be described and regeneration needs will be addressed, if applicable.

All deviation from the specification guide must have written justification and be mutually agreed upon by TSP Forester and NRCS Field Office

## Improvement of Lumber Quality

This pruning is primarily for the removal of selected branches from lower stems to improve the quality of future wood products, in areas where the quality of the final product can be improved and the site quality is high enough to economically produce lumber quality trees.

Selection of trees to be pruned will be consistent with technical specifications for pruning and silvicultural principles.

Pruned trees will be of a species, form, and vigor that indicate future potential for improving sawlog grade. Damaged or diseased trees, trees with excessive branches >2 inches dbh, multiple crooks, sweep, or other stem or crown defects that cannot be remedied, will not be selected.

On fair to excellent growing sites, any species of hardwood or softwood may be pruned when it is considered economically prudent as determined by the TSP. For example, white and red pine (for poles) may be pruned when they occur on outwash soils rated fair to excellent for productivity.

Pruned trees will be selected with the intent of retaining pruned trees until financial maturity.

Pruned trees will be 3-12 inches dbh (diameter at breast height), and at least 25 feet tall, with a live crown ratio >30%.

Pruned trees are already released on 3-4 sides of the crown. Competing crowns are at least five feet from crown of pruned tree.

At least a total 50 trees per acre or a minimum of 25 trees per acre, within each scenario as list below, will be pruned. All trees to be pruned must be marked By TSP on the stem at approximately eye-level as documented in the design.

Payment Scenarios;

1. 0 to 9 feet (Pruning-Low Height)

2. 9 to at least 17 feet (Pruning-High Height)

Pruning is best done with a pruning saw. Use of chainsaws on a pole is discouraged.

Pruning must leave trees with a live crown ratio >30%. Pruning shall apply only to that portion of the trunk in need of pruning.

Limbs will be cut as close to the bole as possible without injuring or removing the collar of tissue at the base of the branch (branch collar). Dead branches of any size may be pruned.

Use of tree pruning paint is not necessary or recommended because of labor and cost factors. The value of painting is aesthetics.

## Protection of Air Quality in Wild LowBush Blueberry Land

To protect air quality in wild low-bush blueberry land prune blueberry plants by flail mowing every other year instead of burning.

Pruning is done prior to the non-bearing season, either in the fall, after the first killing frost, after harvest, or early spring before plants break dormancy.

Slash can be left on field as mulch, if it doesn't cause a fire or pest hazard. Mulch will be added where bare areas occur as result of mowing. See Code 484, Mulching Practice Standard for criteria requirements.

This practice may also be used in conjunction with Code 500, Obstruction Removal Practice Standard to provide a level field for equipment.

Refer to Code 660 - Pruning Blueberries Job Sheet for practice specifications.

## Pruning-Wildlife

### Apple

Examine the apple tree and remove all multiple stems, leave one main, healthy stem

uncut. Cut the multiple stems as close to the ground as possible.

Apple trees should be pruned in late winter or early spring before leaf out and after danger of severe cold has passed.

Remove all dead branches from the tree. Disease and insect-infested branches should be burned or removed from the site.

Remove approximately one-third of the remaining live growth. Try to open up thick clusters of branches. Clip off one or two feet from the ends of vigorous side branches. Do not remove the vigorous spur branches on the side of larger branches, which are the apple-bearing ones.

If the tree is a young sapling, the top can be cut off to encourage side branching.

When cutting competing woody vegetation (releasing) around an apple tree, leave some vegetation on the north side of the tree to provide wildlife cover

#### Other trees/shrubs

A broken, jagged limb 3-6" beyond branch collar will usually result in a cavity which may result in improved habitat for cavity nesting birds and animals.

Appropriate pruning of shrubs will result in more fruit. For example, blueberries bear more fruit on 1-year shoots than on old mature branches.

#### **REFERENCES**

Berg-Stack, Lois. 1998. Pruning Woody Landscape Plants. University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Bulletin #2169.

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The Profit in Pruning Forest Fact Sheet. 1986. Maine Forest Service.

The National Arbor Day Foundation. 1999. Tree City USA Bulletin No. 1-*How to Prune Young Shade Trees*.

Pruning Handbook. 1985. Sunset Books.

Connecticut-Rhode Island Christmas Tree Growers Manual. Connecticut Cooperative Extension.

University of Maine Cooperative Extension. 2004. Wild Apple Trees for Wildlife. Bulletin 7126.

Chris Schnepf. White Pine Blister Rust: Pruning Can Increase Survival. UI Extension Forestry Information Series, Insects and Diseases No. 5. University of Idaho Cooperative Extension.

Pruning Lowbush Blueberry Fields, Fact Sheet No. 229. UMaine Extension No. 2168. February 1988.