

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

TREE/SHRUB PRUNING

(Ac.)

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

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies on any area with trees or shrubs.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

Selection of trees to be pruned will be consistent with silvicultural or horticultural principles and Tree/Shrub Pruning, Code 660, Specification Guide sheets.

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

All trees to be pruned must be marked on the stem or in some other agreed-to method. Refer to Tree/Shrub Pruning, Code 660, Specification Guide Sheets for details.

The pruning and shearing method and timing will match the limitations of the site, soils and plants and minimize damage to the residual plant bole/stems and limbs. For a high degree of removal of crown foliage, pruning and shearing shall be done in two or more timed intervals to minimize plant stress. No more than 70% total of live crown shall be removed at one time.

Debris and vegetative material left on the site after treatment will not present an unacceptable fire or pest hazard or interfere with the intended purpose and other management activities.

Ground vegetation and/or conditions must be left in a manner to address erosion and other natural resource concerns to acceptable levels.

Disinfect pruning and shearing tools to minimize the spread of pathogens.

Additional Criteria Applicable to Improving the Health and Vigor of Woody Plants e.g. Disease, Insect and Injury Management

For White Pine Blister Rust, prune a minimum of 8 feet on canker-free pole and sawtimber-size trees. On 6 to 10-foot tall canker-free, sapling-size white pine prune no higher than 50% of a tree's height, to maintain a healthy crown (e.g. on a 6 foot tree you would only prune up 3 feet). You can prune up to 8 feet as the tree grows taller.

For ice and snow damage, prune selected trees of any age of broken or damaged

branches as long as pruning leaves no less than 50 percent live crown and the tree is otherwise healthy. Also remove weak, narrow-angled, v-shaped crotches to prevent future damage.

Prune a minimum of 20 trees and a maximum of 120 trees per acre. Avoid pruning white pine in spring as bark may be damaged more easily. Promptly remove all pruning debris.

Additional Criteria Applicable to Air Quality Protection in Wild Low-bush Blueberry Land

To improve air quality in wild, low-bush blueberry land, plants will be pruned every other year using a flail-mower to stimulate new vegetative growth in lieu 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.

Debris and vegetative material left on the site after treatment will not present an unacceptable fire or pest hazard or interfere with the intended purpose and other management activities.

Pruning is frequently used in conjunction with the Obstruction Removal practice, Code 500 to level the field for equipment, and the Mulching practice, Code 484 to reduce erosion and weed competition.

CONSIDERATIONS

Pruning and shearing should be timed to minimize disturbance to seasonal wildlife activities.

Review the estimated cost and projected economic benefits of the project before starting a pruning or shearing project.

Branches removed may be used for other products.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for applying this practice shall be prepared for each site and recorded using Tree/Shrub Pruning Practice, Code 660,

specification sheets, job sheets, technical notes and narrative statements in the conservation plan, or other acceptable documentation.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Periodically inspect plant condition and do additional pruning if needed.

REFERENCES

- A New Tree Biology. Shigo and Trees, Associates; 1986.
- Care for Your Trees. Univ. of Illinois, Circular 1059. 1972.
- Christmas Trees – A Management Guide. Univ. of Nebraska, EC 76-1741. 1976.
- Lateral Pruning. Walnut Notes, North Central Forest Experiment Station. 1988.
- Pruning Forest Trees. UMC Forestry Guide No. 5160. 1989.
- Shaping Pine Christmas Trees for Quality. UMC Forestry Guide No. 5706. 1972.
- Growing Pecans. KSU Horticultural Report MF-1025. Kansas State University. 1992
- Pruning by Plowing. Missouri Conservationist. February 1990.
- White Pine Blister Rust: Pruning Can Increase Survival. University of Idaho Extension Forestry Information Series, Insects and Diseases No. 5.
- HOW to Manage Eastern White Pine to Minimize Damage from Blister Rust and White Pine Weevil. NA-FR-01-93. [Radnor, PA]: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Forest Service, Northern Area State & Private Forestry.1993.
- White Pine Blister Rust. Forest Pest Leaflet No. 36. USDA Forest Service. 1959.
- Pruning Lowbush Blueberry Fields, Fact Sheet No. 229. UMaine Extension No. 2168. February 1988.