

**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. Landowner and Design Preparer name and address:

1. Property Location, including town and county, and NRCS Field Office.

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

Any variance from the specification guide must have written justification and be mutually agreed upon by TSP Forester and NRCS Field Office.

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.

Mowing 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.

General Tree Pruning Considerations

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

At least 5 trees per acre will be pruned. All trees to be pruned will be designated by TSP, as described in Design document.

Pruned trees must have a live crown ratio >30%.

Pruning shall apply only to that portion of the trunk in need of pruning.

Pruning of softwoods may be done anytime. However, dormant season is usually preferable.

Hardwoods should be pruned only during the dormant season.

Pruning 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.

Sanitation Pruning

This pruning is for trees where insects, and/or diseases create the potential for reducing growth, causing tree deformities and/or death associated with one or more of the following situations:

- a. Black Knot is one of the most common diseases of plum and cherry. Caused by the fungus *Apiosporina morbosa* and can severely limit the production of fruit trees.
- b. Sirococcus shoot blight has become increasingly common throughout Maine. Infection of red pines and several other species of hard pines.
- c. Eastern Dwarf Mistletoe is a parasitic plant that stimulates the production of large twiggy growths (brooms) on native spruce, is common in some stands of white and red spruce on islands and headlands along the Maine coast.
- d. Other stands, at the recommendations of the TSP Forester, with a significant (greater than 25%) documented occurrence of insect-infested, cankered, or otherwise diseased stems that could restrict the vigor of the stand or pose a hazard to remaining trees

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.

University of Maine Cooperative Extension. Yankee Woodlot Series # 6 - Working With It. Bulletin #7079.

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.