PROTECT YOUR INVESTMENT!

Good reasons not to top trees and alternatives to consider.

DNR Urban & Community Forestry Program

Purple leafed plums - topped

Natural form of a purple leafed plum
What is tree topping?

- Topping is the practice of severely cutting back or removing large branches in mature trees.
- Other names for topping include: stubbing, heading, hat racking, rounding over.
Why is topping bad?

- Topping creates wounds that permanently damage trees.
- Topping leads to decay, rot and often the death of the tree.
- Poorly attached branches are prone to breaking and become a hazard.

A result of topping; poorly attached re-grown branches, significant decay, death.
Why is topping bad?

• If it doesn’t kill the tree, topping results in aggressive re-growth of branches, thicker and more numerous than those that were removed.
• Maintenance costs rise; trees need continual pruning.
Why is topping bad?

- Disfigured trees can reduce property value.
- If trees are not maintained, they become a liability.
- Topped trees are ugly!
Alternatives to Topping

• Start out with the right tree in the right place; don’t plant big trees in small spaces.

• Begin structural pruning early in the life of a tree; prune regularly.
Hire a Professional!

- Certified Arborists practice responsible pruning techniques:
  
  **Crown Cleaning:** Ideal for trees with broken branches, or that look unkempt.
  
  **Crown Thinning:** Ideal for creating more light, reducing weight in areas of high winds, or creating a view window.
  
  **Crown Raising:** Ideal for providing visibility, or sidewalk or driveway clearance.
  
  **Remove & Replace:** May be necessary, if a tree is no longer appropriate for its current site.
Hire a Professional!

- If necessary, certified arborists may reduce the height of a tree using a technique called crown reduction.
- Tree limbs are pruned to junctions of branches at least 1/3 the diameter of the branch being removed.
- Branches are cut for a specific purpose, with a goal in mind.
Resources

• Get informed!
  – Arbor Day Foundation tree pruning guide: http://www.arborday.org/trees/pruning/
  – Find out more about “Why Tree Topping Hurts Trees:” http://www.utextension.utk.edu/publications/spfiles/sp549.pdf

• Read a book!

• Find a Professional!
  – Find a certified arborist in your area:
    International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) http://www.treesaregood.org/findtreeservices/FindTreeCareService.aspx
    ISA Pacific Northwest Chapter: http://www.pnwisa.org/
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Remember: Experts agree, DON’T top your tree!

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Images for this presentation courtesy of:
Arbor Day Foundation http://www.arborday.org/
City of Olympia, WA “Stop Tree Topping” campaign
“Experts agree, don’t top your tree” slogan
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