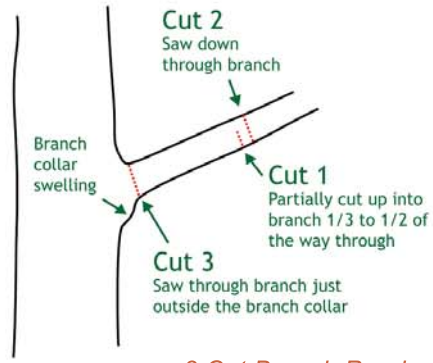


Tree Pruning Basics - By Matt Durham



Healthy, good looking trees are priceless in a landscape. They can accentuate a good design or hide a bad design. They can provide shade on a hot summer day and their twisted and weathered branches can excite the imagination of children and adults alike. One of the keys to a wonderful tree, which is important even when the tree is just a seedling in a nursery, is pruning.

There are many reasons to prune a tree. You can prune to maintain or improve a tree's appearance, to promote healthy growth and development and to protect people and property. No matter what the reason you are pruning a tree you are most likely using one of four types of tree pruning; **crown thinning**, **crown raising**, **crown reduction**, and **crown cleaning**.

Crown thinning is the process of removing branches throughout the entire crown of the tree. This is especially important in younger trees to allow light and air movement in and around its branches which promotes even growth and reduces stress from wind. This process is also performed on larger trees but should not be overdone. Select weak, closely spaced or misshapen branches to remove first. **Crown raising** is the removal of lower branches. This is typically done to allow for more room under a tree for people or vehicles. **Crown reduction** is the removal of branches from the top of the tree. This is done to reduce the overall height of the tree or the weight of large branches. Crown reduction is not the same as topping as no stubs should be left over. Whole branches are removed at crotches. Crown reduction should only be used when necessary and not as a common practice. If it is used frequently it is most likely because an incorrect species was selected for the space or environment. Finally, **crown cleaning** is the removal of dead, dying or diseased branches.

Each tree species has its own best time for pruning. For most it will be late winter so that spring growth quickly heals the wounds from pruning. Cuts should be made with clean, sharp tools to reduce the risk of infection. Large branches should always utilize the 3 cut process (google it for detailed instructions). Try to never remove more than 1/4 of a trees crown in a season and don't prune the lower branches more than 1/3 up from the bottom of the trees total height.

"Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass; it's about learning to dance in the rain."
 — Vivian Greene

Favorite Flora: Pistacia lentiscus- Mastic Tree- By Matt Durham



Mastic Tree pruned into a tree form



Mastic Tree kept in a shrub form

Finding the right trees and shrubs to place around a pool is often a challenge. A common mistake is to place evergreen trees such as pines or African Sumacs with the thought that evergreen trees never lose their leaves, only to find out that they lose their leaves all year. Others might think a Mexican fan palm could be the answer, after all how much of a mess can a palm tree make. But unless the flower stalks are pruned throughout the summer before they open there will be a nice layer of tiny flowers coating the waters surface.

This month's favorite flora is a plant that actually does well around a pool. The Mastic Tree (*Pistacia lentiscus*) is a large shrub/ small tree is evergreen AND is one of the cleanest plants in a landscape. This Mediterranean native has green glossy leaves, reddish brown branches and grows from 8-12 feet tall and 10-15 feet wide. It is mostly grown as a large shrub but can be trained into a small tree as it ages. It has small green colored blooms in the spring that mostly go unnoticed. The Mastic Tree produces an aromatic resin that has been used in everything from gum, medicine, food and drinks for thousands of years.

The Mastic Tree prefers full sun and is drought tolerant. It can also handle temperatures to around 15 degrees and does well in poor or salty soils. Prune only as needed to maintain the desired shape. This evergreen works well to screen a wall or as a small patio tree. Plant the Mastic Tree with plants such as Yellow Bells (*Tecoma stans*), Aloes (*Aloe spp.*) and Germander (*Teucrium chamaedrys*).

Photo of the Month



Chance
 T-Mobile Arena, NV
 Justin Van Cleef