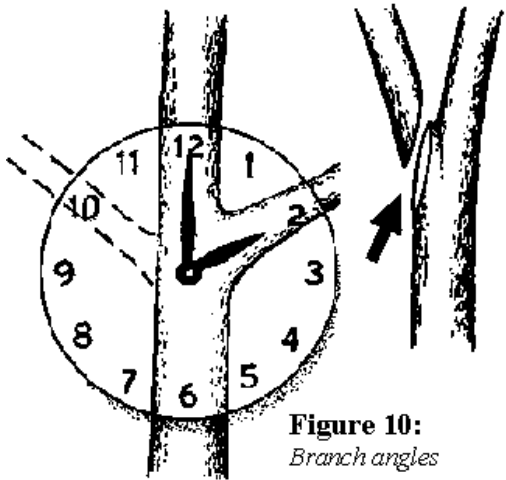


# Use The 1/3 and 1/4 Rules of Pruning Trees

By Grant Sork, Natural Resource Conservation Service

Now that the trees are dormant for the winter we can think about pruning them. Here are some simple rules that will make pruning easier and also make your tree healthier and more attractive.

- 1) Never remove more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a tree's crown in a season.
- 2) Where possible, try to encourage side branches that form angles that are  $\frac{1}{3}$  off vertical, this means cutting them at the 10:00 or 2:00 as on a clock face.



- 3) For most species, the tree should have a single trunk. Select the largest and most vigorous stem.
- 4) Ideally, main side branches should be at least  $\frac{1}{3}$  smaller than the diameter of the trunk.
- 5) If removal of a main branch is necessary, cut it back to where it is attached to another large branch or the trunk. Do not truncate or leave a stub.
- 6) For most deciduous (broadleaf) trees, don't prune up from the bottom any more than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the tree's total height.

By following these simple rules you can have good success with your pruning efforts, and also support the health of your trees.

More detailed information is available in a U.S. Forest Service publication.

[http://www.na.fs.fed.us/Spfo/pubs/howtos/ht\\_prune/addinfo.htm](http://www.na.fs.fed.us/Spfo/pubs/howtos/ht_prune/addinfo.htm)

Animated step by step tree pruning guide.

<http://www.arboday.org/trees/pruning/?TrackingID=106&gclid=CPrZn6DEx54CFQiA5QodMUCXsA>

Video on pruning an apple tree: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-7224124031635129593#>

Kansas State University publication on pruning fruit trees. Lots of diagrams.

<http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/library/hort2/C631.pdf>