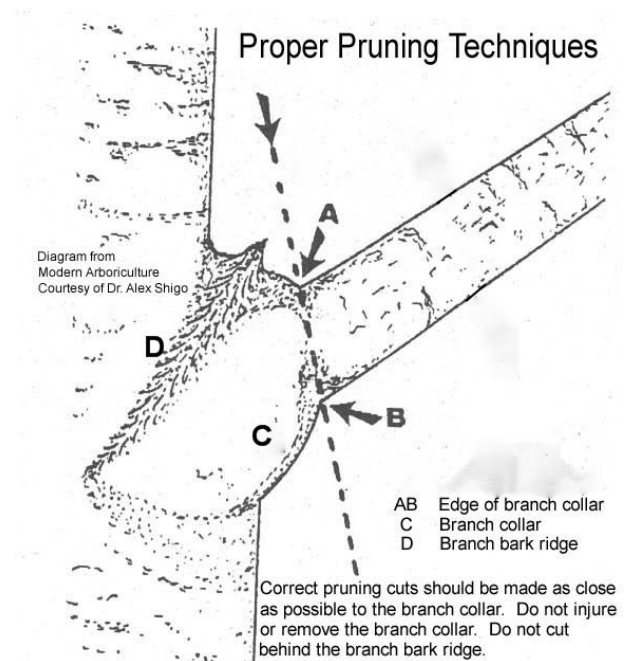
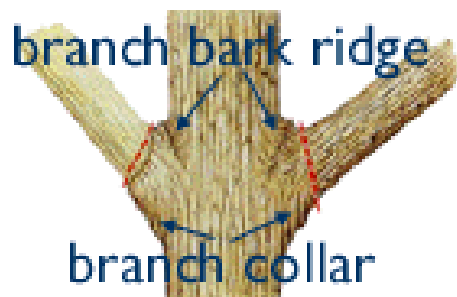


Natural Target Pruning

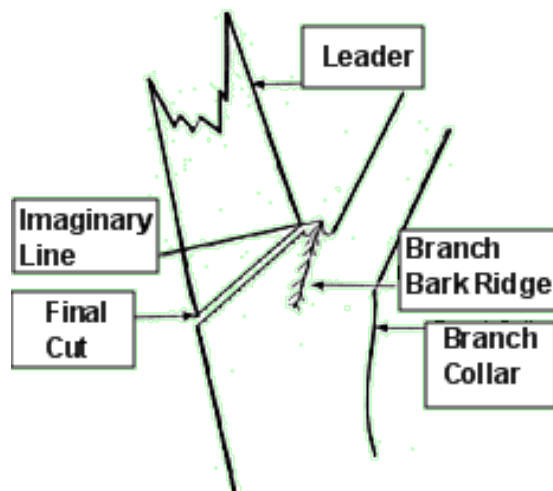
by Tom Del Hotal

Natural target pruning is the way for making a proper pruning cut. Natural target pruning will allow the tree to heal the pruning wound as quickly as possible. Natural target pruning wounds heal faster because the cut is made as small as possible (as opposed to flush cutting) with the minimum amount of dead wood remaining (as opposed to leaving a stub).

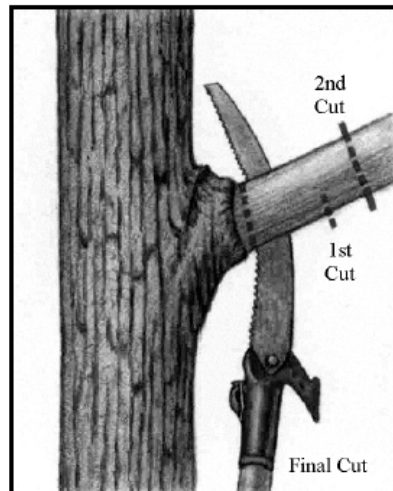
The key to natural target pruning is finding the branch collar which is the natural target for the cut. The pruning cut should always be just outside of this collar, but not far enough to leave a stub of branch. The branch collar is evident on many species of tree, some more than others. It is the base of the branch where the natural branch taper begins to flare out as it connects to the limb or trunk. **The branch collar should never be injured, cut into or compromised in any way.**



Some trees make it a little harder on us to find the target cut, but for them there is another rule of thumb generalization developed by Dr. Alex Shigo. Find the branch bark ridge, it is the area of raised bark extending down from the crotch. Find the line perpendicular to the branch to be pruned. Make your cut half way between the two.



If the branch to be pruned is larger than you can control easily it necessary to make a 3-part cut to ensure that the bark does not tear down the limb or trunk, resulting in an embarrassing scar and a larger wound. The 3-part cut is done by making an undercut about a foot from the branch collar. End this cut just as the branch is beginning to grab the saw. Directly above the undercut or slightly further out the limb, make the second cut, holding onto the branch so that it can be controlled as it falls. Finish with a natural target pruning cut at the branch collar.



Three step cut--use it when a branch is bigger than you can hold in your hand. USDA Forest Service

Natural target pruning is a way to minimize the detrimental effects caused by pruning wounds.

Remember:

- A wound on a tree is a wound forever. Trees seal or compartmentalize a wound, they do not heal a wound.
- The goal of any responsible pruner is to reduce the harmful effects of their pruning wounds. This is done by pruning in such a way as to facilitate the closure and compartmentalization of these wounds as quickly as possible by following the principles of natural target pruning.
- **Do not:**
 - make flush cuts behind the branch bark ridge.
 - leave living or dead stubs.
 - injure or remove the branch collar.
 - paint cuts.

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