



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Topping Trees: A Prescription for Disaster

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At one point in history, most people thought the sun revolved around the earth. With careful study, this was found to be incorrect. People once thought cutting the tops off trees was the best way to make them safe. We now know that to be wrong as well.

Unfortunately, many tree workers, tree companies, and landscapers don't seem to have gotten the message. For 25 years it's been known that the practice referred to as "topping" is harmful to trees, so if someone comes to you and tells you they can "top" your tree to make it safer, and so you can sleep better at night, you know now they are not professional arborists.

For the time being, we won't include utility pruning of trees. Utility arborist in most cases don't top trees but prune them by carefully removing branches that grow toward energized conductors (like wires). This type of pruning is referred to or known as lateral/directional pruning, which in turn causes less harm to the tree, and increases electric service reliability to your home or business.

Topping is simply the removal of the "top" of the tree for any number of reasons. Whatever the reason, it's incorrect and will lead to greater problems in the future. Topping "shocks" a tree by often removing 50% or more of the leaf canopy, which is where trees create the food they need. This reduction in food and energy immediately puts the tree into a state of stress. The more stress on a tree, the more at risk it is from other stress factors, as well as having fewer resources to fight off things like pests, diseases, and decay. The tree often responds by sending out new shoots and leaves to replace the food source it just lost. Since the purported goal of topping is to reduce the size of a tree, new growth at or near the topping cut is the exact opposite of the goal, isn't it?

The new growth that follows topping has also been found to often be less structurally sound than the branches just removed. With a few years of growth, you end up with multiple larger branches with a greater chance of failure, and a less safe tree. Again, not the goal, right?

Topping also exposes underlying branches and trunks to harsh sun and wind that previously were blocked by the upper canopy. This can cause sunscald, cankers, and branch dieback. Suddenly exposed branches that were protected by the upper canopy are now subjected to greater winds and movement that they never faced before, which now puts them at greater risk of failure.

There are more reasons why topping is exactly the wrong thing to do to a tree, and an ISA Certified Arborist can discuss them with you. Don't put your tree at risk by hiring just anyone to care for your trees. To find an ISA Certified Arborist near you, visit www.Trees4Ohio.org.

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ABOUT US: The mission of the Ohio Chapter International Society of Arboriculture is to advance responsible tree care practices through research, technology, and education while promoting the benefits of trees. Visit us at: www.ohiochapterisa.org.

Over 1,000 Ohio Professionals Ready to Help!

There are over 1,000 qualified tree experts in the state of Ohio that have been designated by the International Society of Arboriculture as Certified Arborists. These tree care professionals have experienced rapid growth over the past decade and there is a significant amount of knowledge required to perform at the highest level. To find a qualified professional in your area, visit www.Trees4Ohio.org.

INTERVIEW AN ISA CERTIFIED ARBORIST: Please contact the Ohio Chapter ISA if you are interested in interviewing a local certified arborist.