

# Pruning Guidelines City of Fredericksburg

**Goal:** *Prune young trees to establish a strong trunk with sturdy well-spaced branches, with an objective of ultimately attaining 15 feet of clearance on the street side of each tree, and 10 feet of clearance on the sidewalk side at maturity.*

- Prune trees during the dormant season only, unless emergency pruning is required for safety or the health of the tree.
- Trees will be pruned the 2nd, 5th, and 10th years after planting. Pruning will be conducted under the concept that only emergency pruning will occur during interim years or after the 10th year pruning. An exception will be for *Ulmus*, *Gleditsia*, and *Cercis*, which will be checked yearly through the 10th year.
- Tree limbs that impede on the sidewalk or block exiting from vehicles, will be subordinated and removed in subsequent pruning.
- Maintain branches on the upper 2/3 of a tree's total height.
- Tree species that should have one central leader, but do not, should be pruned to produce a central leader – i.e.: *Nyssa*, *Quercus*, *Acer*, *Gingko*. If co-dominant leaders exist, they be subordinated or eliminated.
- Remove all dead wood and damaged branches.
- Remove basal and trunk sprouts.
- Prune out limbs that are crossed or rubbing, growing back toward the center of the crown, or interfering with better branches nearby.
- To prevent the bark from tearing below the pruning cut, use the three-cut method to ensure a proper cut.
- Make pruning cuts just outside the branch collar, and nearly, but not completely flush to the trunk.
- Remove branches with weak acute angles of attachment and/or included bark, preferably when the branches are still small.
- Branches should be evenly spaced up the trunk of a young tree. Remove or subordinate branches that are poorly spaced.
- No more than 15% of the crown should be removed at one time. If additional removal is required in certain situations, it absolutely should not exceed 25%. If you must remove more than 15% of the crown, do it over several years. An exception to this rule is that more might need to be done at once to gain clearance on the street that will help prevent damage to the tree. Use crown reduction pruning only when absolutely necessary. Tree topping must never be done.
- Prune crape myrtle in early spring or mid-summer for shape. Crape myrtles should never be topped.
- While at the tree, check for girdling roots; potential insect, disease, or vandalism damage; and note over-mulching. Also, note if and when a tree needs follow up pruning. Note if the lead needs training with bamboo or other help.