



MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT PRUNING AND PLANTING TREES

MYTH or FACT? George Washington chopped down the cherry tree with his hatchet in February.

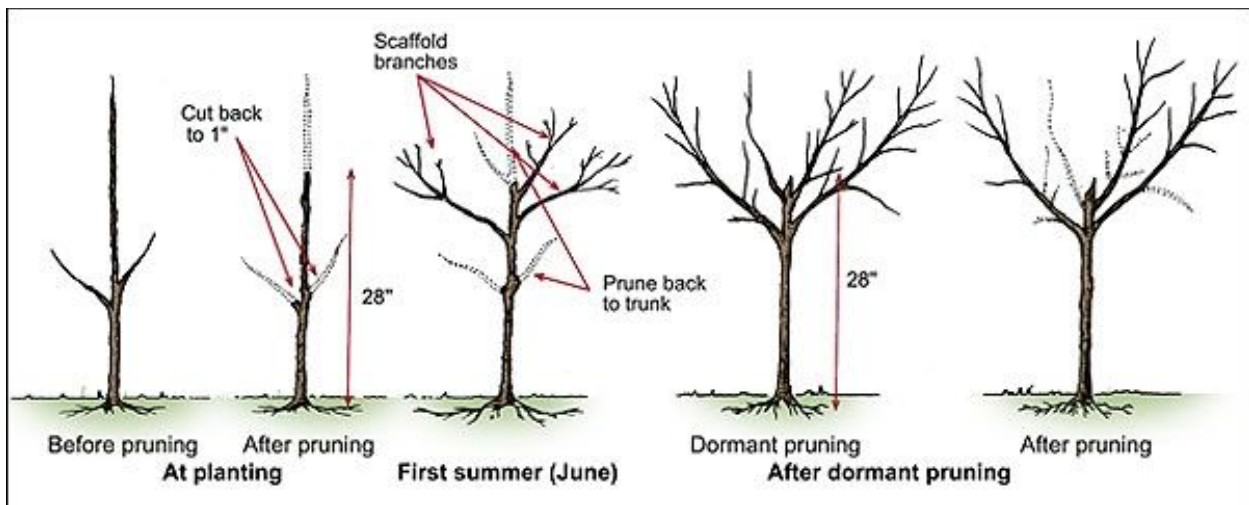
MYTH: Although it is said young George's honesty gained him more honor from his father than a thousand trees, it is not proven that the lad actually took the tree down or in February.

However, winter is the preferred time to prune trees, and this myth that surfaces around President's Day each year will help you remember when to prune.



Image credit: MountVernon.org

FACT: Pruning can add considerable stamina and longevity to your trees and shrubs if done properly. It is part art and part science. Pruning fruit trees will look different from pruning deciduous and evergreen trees. First, fruit trees are fabulous additions to your landscape. They thrive and produce fruit when sunlight and airflow are optimized. By removing dead limbs, lower ones that interfere with upward growth, and crossing branches that grow towards the center of the crown, you can encourage and 'train' the tree to grow outwards and upwards to reach sunlight. (See diagram)



Fruit Tree Pruning. Image credit: ucanr.edu

MYTH or FACT? Top-pruning evergreen and deciduous trees encourages wider crown growth.

MYTH: More is not more in the case of pruning evergreen and deciduous trees: Simply put, never top a tree.

FACT: While you may have seen beautiful European plane trees pruned into wide-trunked, compacted-crowned masterpieces using a pollarding technique, topping opens up large wounds in trees where bugs and diseases can enter and destroy otherwise healthy trees. Topping also creates weakened sprouts and removes vital leaf canopy for energy. Before taking the shears and saws to your trees, determine the shape and health of your trees. Best yet, consult a professional arborist or online resources. For a comprehensive guide to pruning, visit the UT Ag Extension office's best practice management guide [HERE](#).



Tree topping in Nashville. Image credit: nashvilletreeconservationcorps.org

MYTH or FACT? One does not need to add compost, mulch, or sand to the planting hole when planting a new tree.

FACT: Adding rich organic material and sand to the planting hole can cause root girdling, as the roots will remain happy where they are and will not spread out to seek nutrients nearby. This sets up a weak root system that will not support a mature tree. Mulch is good if applied properly: spread a 2" layer of mulch around the tree and away from the trunk.

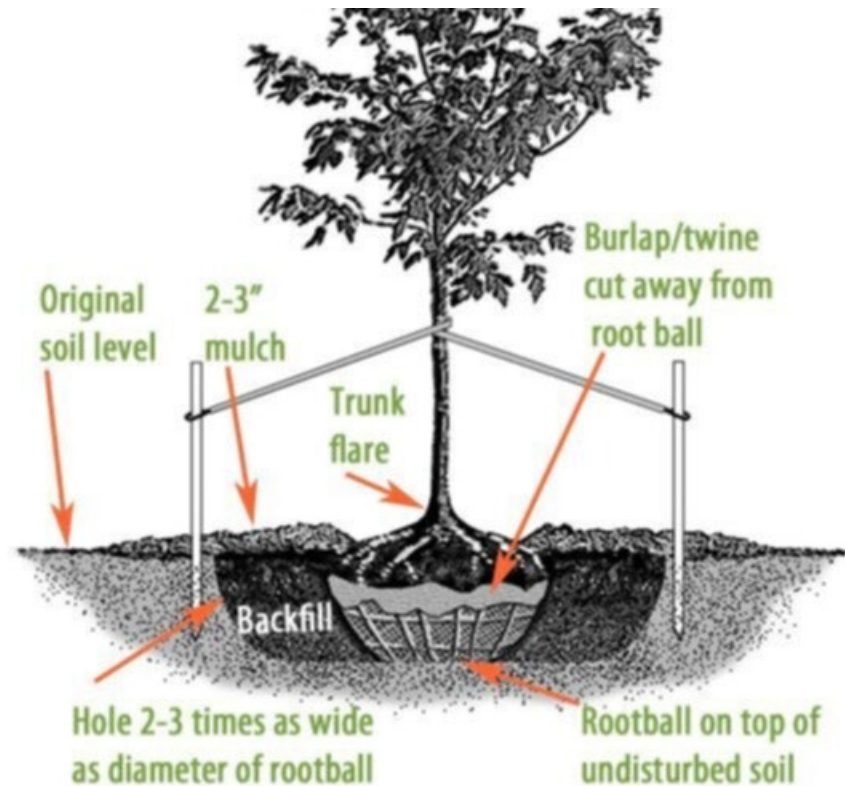


Image credit: Gardeners.com

MYTH OR FACT? Trees planted in my front yard will be safe from utility company's tree trimming practices, because they are planted on my property.

MYTH: Look up before you plant any trees. Mature trees can have a crown spread that interferes with the above-ground utility lines even if planted out of the public right of way and in your yard. Utility companies get a bad rap for aggressive trim cycles to keep uninterrupted service to their customers, but, frankly, the trees were most likely planted in the wrong spot.

Likewise, the roots of trees planted near water and sewer lines could damage pipes. Call 811 before you dig to have all subgrade utility lines marked.

MYTH OR FACT? Vines growing on tree trunks are not healthy.

FACT: Vines can rob trees of important nutrients, and, if overgrown in the tree, can disguise any diseases or stress trees may be under. Remove vines from the base and trunk of your tree carefully. First, dig up the vines then carefully cut larger vines at the base if digging is not an option. While the tree may look bad while the vines die away, stripping the vines from the bark can open up wounds in the tree and cause damage much like topping does. [Read more here](#).



Image credit: GardeningKnowHow.com

MYTH OR FACT? I need to spend a lot of money to get a good tree.

MYTH: Your tree investment should come from a reputable nursery or local program that brokers trees from local growers in McMinnville to your front yard. Trees with a 1-2" diameter have the best chance of survival over bare root seedlings. But never look any free tree in the eye - the right tree planted in the right spot in your yard will be the best long term investment in Belle Meade's future sustainability, especially native trees. [CLICK here](#) to learn more about "nursery to yard" tree sales from Metro Tree Advisory Committee and Nashville Tree Conservation Corps.

-- by Carolyn Sorenson, Ceres Committee Member