

Safety Advice for Firewise Work on Trees and Shrubs

1. Saw and lopper blades are extremely sharp, the tools are heavy, & falling limbs are dangerous. Wear protective gloves, safety glasses, work boots with toe protection, and wear a hard hat if working overhead.
2. Stand away, to the side at an angle, when cutting limbs overhead.
3. When cutting overhead, work from the ground never from a ladder. Be extra cautious with overhead sawing on uneven or steeply sloping ground.
4. Start with clean blades. Clean gummed up blades during or after work as needed. Use turpentine, lacquer thinner or acetone.
5. WARNING: Do not use a pole saw near a power line.
6. Use expert cutting techniques to preserve tree & shrub health:
 - a. Before cutting, observe the branch to be cut and identify the branch collar (growing from the stem tissue at the underside of the base of the branch) and the branch bark ridge that runs (more or less) parallel to the branch angle, along the stem of the tree above the branch node. A proper pruning cut is made outside the branch collar and the branch bark ridge and does not damage either.
 - b. Branches large enough to require saws should be supported with one hand while the cuts are made. If the branch is too large or too high to support by hand, make a three-step pruning cut to prevent ripping bark below the cut.
 - i. Make each cut with pulling strokes. Pole and hand saw blades are designed to be pulled, not pushed, making your job easier and minimizing dulling of the blade.
 - ii. The first cut is a shallow notch made on the underside of the branch, outside the branch collar.
 - iii. The second cut should be outside the first cut, all the way through the branch, leaving a short stub.
 - iv. The stub is then cut just outside the branch bark ridge/branch collar, completing the operation.

Special Notes about Treatment of Pine Trees:

Firewise Prescription: Remove limbs as far up as 8-12 feet from ground (higher is better, especially if there are tall grasses or shrubs nearby).

Help Prevent Tree Kills from Bark Beetles: Avoid creating & leaving green pine debris from January (even December, to be extra safe) through June. If you cut green limbs or small trees in that period, burn, chip or chop promptly, as you work. Green woody debris, not thoroughly dry by early spring, can be infested with bark beetles that then reproduce, feed on the green slash and then infest live standing trees.