

Do You Have Problems With:

- Too much shade to grow grass
- Growth and vigor of understory plants
- Appearance of trees or shrubs
- Quality of wood products
- Production of plant products
- Fire and/or safety hazards

Purposes and Benefits of Pruning:

Pruning is done on land used for recreation, production of timber and non-timber crops. For example, in a woods where ginseng is being raised, trees may need to be pruned to increase light to the forest floor. If cattle are grazed in the woods pruning can enhance forage production.

Some of the benefits are:

- Increase the production of crops or forage being grown in with trees.
- Increase the value of existing trees for timber harvest
- Make it easier to move equipment



Costs to Do Pruning:

The costs of pruning will vary depending upon the size, type and number of trees to be pruned. Pruning can be expensive and time consuming. Concentrate on pruning trees that will provide the most economic return.

When pruning to improve timber value, prune high value trees. In the average pine plantation, 100 – 150 trees per acre should be selected for pruning.

Some of the costs to consider are:

- Cost of equipment (loppers or pruning saws).
- Manual labor involved in actual pruning process.
- Cleaning up debris if it hampers production of understory crops or forage.

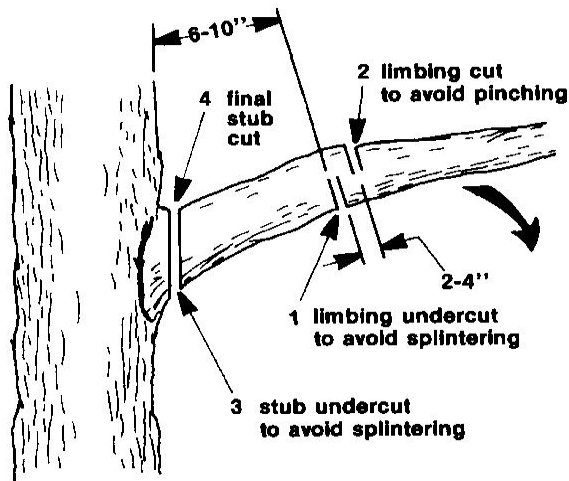
Tree Pruning

How to Install the Practice:

Use a pruning saw or loppers, never an ax.

Do not cut flush with the tree trunk. Locate the branch bark ridge and make pruning cuts on the outside of the branch collar. Do not leave branch stubs, living or dead. See sketch below.

Cut small branches from the top. Very large branches may need an undercut prior to overcut to prevent tearing of bark or splitting of the limbs.



Proper steps in pruning

Do not remove more than half of the live branches at any one time.

For the purpose of producing a clear, knot-free log, prune every 4-6 years. The goal is to a clear log 18-26 feet long. Each pruning should never be more than two-thirds of the total tree height.

Dead branches can be pruned during any season. Green branches should be pruned during winter when trees are dormant and the disease and insect hazard is lower. Do not prune during the growing season.

Use appropriate safety equipment when pruning such as hard hats, gloves, eye protection and hearing protection. Even something as simple as standing up wind when cutting will keep saw dust out of your face and eyes.

When working overhead with limbing saws, make sure to stand clear of falling limbs.

How to Maintain the Practice:

Pruning should not need to be done every year, but an annual inspection should be made to check tree health and prune any damaged or diseased trees or limbs.

For best results, prune only half the height of the tree. Never prune more than two-thirds of the total height.

Other Benefits:

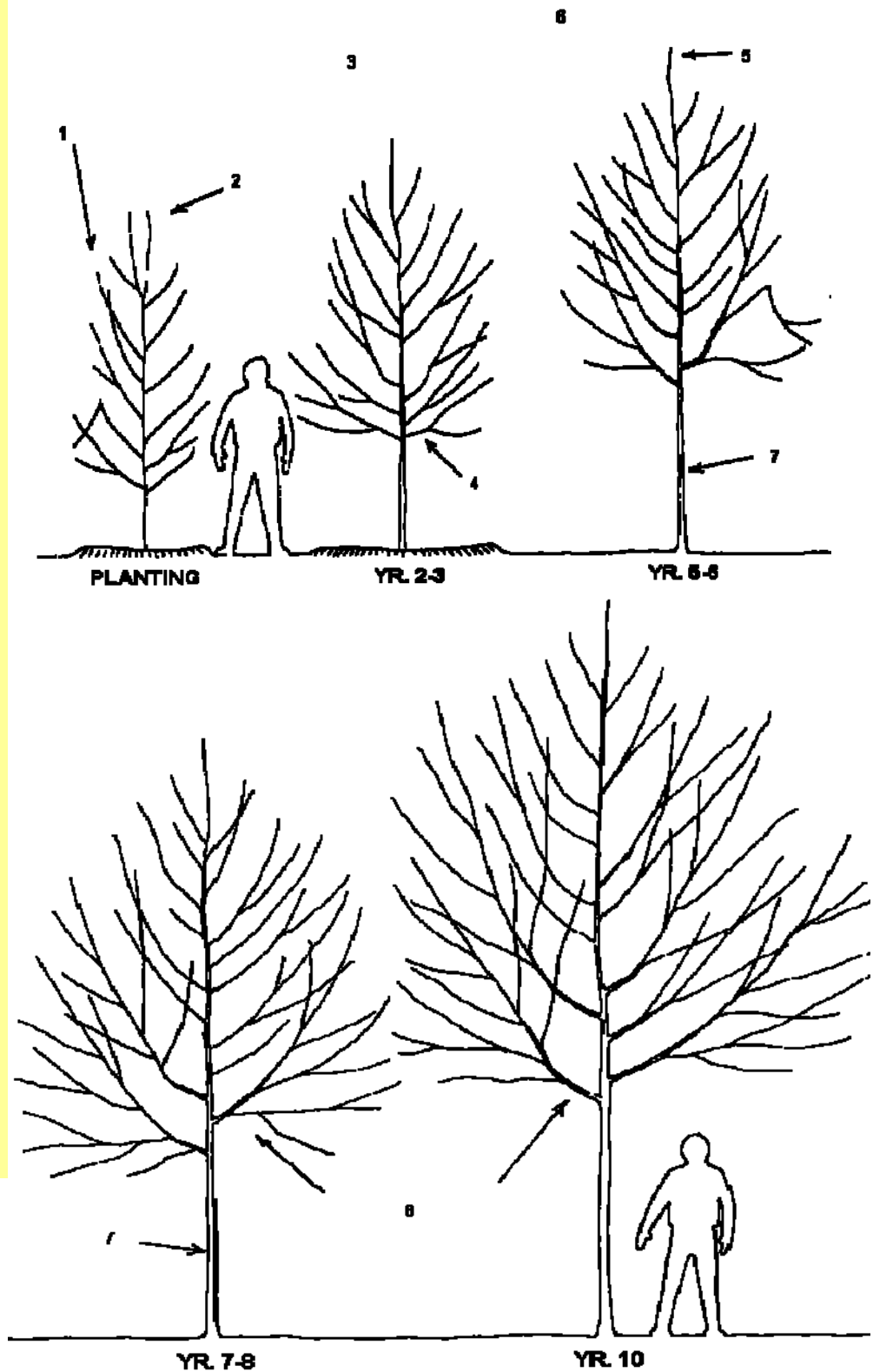
Pruning can make the trees in your woods more valuable. It can allow you grow other valuable crops in the woods along with the trees.

Pruning can make it easier to get around in your woods. This is especially important if you are harvesting other crops in the woods or if you just want to get your tractor in the woods to load firewood.

Properly done, pruning can make your woods healthier and more productive.

Tree Pruning

1. Limited Pruning. Remove dead or broken branches.
2. Double Leader
3. Reduce multiple leaders to a single top. Remove narrow, V-shaped crotches.
4. Begin to remove lower branches.
5. Maintain a central leader or single stem for many tree species.
6. Avoid removing more than 1/3 of total branches at one time. Prune weak trees less.
7. Avoid damage to trunk over entire life of tree.
8. Continue to remove lower branches to maximize clearance.



Prune Young Trees Gradually

Diagram Courtesy of Missouri Department of Conservation

SMALL SCALE SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR FARM

Technical Help Is Available

Your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office has experienced conservationists that can assist you with tree pruning. They can also help you develop a Conservation Plan to solve other problems you have identified on your farm.

There is no charge for our assistance. Simply call your local office at the number listed below to set up an appointment and we will come to your farm.

You may also be eligible to receive financial assistance, through a state or federal program. Your NRCS office will explain any programs that are available so you can make the best decision for your operation. All NRCS programs and services are voluntary.



Helping People Help the Land

For More Information Contact the:

Natural Resources Conservation Service

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