

## Formative Pruning Part II

Last week we defined Formative Pruning as pruning cuts made to correct structural defects of young trees. While I am a proponent of not pruning a newly planted tree for the first few years of growth, formative pruning may be needed. For example, sometimes heading cuts were performed by the tree grower or nursery to stimulate a thicker crown. Corrective pruning will be needed to ensure good form and structure. Again, remember last week's analogy of a little corrective pruning done as a tree develops prevents a "Wild Child" with bad habits down the road.

An all too common scenario often plays out like this. I will be standing in a yard looking at a Red Maple tree, such as an Autumn Blaze or Autumn Flame with a customer. It has been ten to twelve years since they planted the tree. They called us because they are concerned it might need some "pruning" attention. Throughout the crown I see plenty of rubbing, crowded and crossing limbs. These can easily be addressed with proper structure pruning. What has me really concerned however is in the center of the tree. Shortly after the tree was planted it developed a codominant top. This could have easily been remedied with a simple pruning cut eliminating one of the two tops and the tree to develop a central leader. Now though, the tree has grown, and these two competing stems are a major part of this tree's structure and the structure is bad. Real bad! (see our website for an actual picture) The two once competing tops are now the two major stems of the tree. This not only formed a poor branch crotch, it is in fact splitting! At this point serious cabling, bracing and pruning will be needed to keep the tree from splitting in half. I might even recommend removal and replacement of the entire tree. To me this is a very frustrating situation as it is not only the potential loss of the tree, but a loss of ten to fifteen growing years! The exasperating part of all is that one small formative prune done to this tree when it was young could have prevented it.

This is the perfect time to address those young trees while they are still dormant.

For further questions, a consultation or quote, please give us a call today!