

# Formative Pruning

## Part I

When explaining the reason to prune young trees to people, I often use the similarity to parenting children. Small but corrective adjustments to a child's behavior as they grow will ensure they mature into productive members of society. The same principal applies to young trees. If small but corrective pruning is performed as the tree grows, the tree will develop good form, shape, and be a structurally sound contribution to a yard and the overall property value.

Adversely, if no proper parenting happens and poor behavior goes unchecked, chances are a "wild child" will develop with plenty of challenges as a young adult. The same with young trees left unpruned as they develop. I have been invited to plenty of homes where we stand in front of a tree and a customer says, "I have never had it pruned and it is kind of a wild child at this point. What can you do?"

We can always do something. At this point it is called, major "Structure Pruning". This may take a few years of severe corrective style pruning to deal with poor form and structure. Small, indiscriminate pruning during the development of a tree to avoid poor structural defects is called "Formative Pruning". The question often arises, how soon should I do this formative pruning to my tree. That's an excellent question. It can be performed as soon as the end of that growing season depending on the species and size of the tree. A young Norway Maple coming from a nursery with good form and structure may not need anything for three to five years. A Prairie Fire Crab Apple may need a formative prune its first year and each year after that to a certain stage due to its growing tendencies.

**Right now**, is an excellent time to do this pruning while the trees are still dormant despite the snow on the ground.

More on this topic next week and as always, for further questions, quotes and consultations, give us a call today!