

Good and Bad Pruning Cuts

The diagram is a stylized representation of a branch in which in theory we need to make two pruning cuts.

First the branch on the right hand side. This shows a live branch that you have decided to remove. The final finished cut would be from **A** to **B**. If the branch is not easy for you to handle, stub cut it first several inches outward from line **A B** and then make your final cut at **A B**. **A** to **C** would be a brutal flush cut removing the collar and its inherent protection of the trunk tissue, it is the worst cut you could make.

The left side is meant to show a dead branch, one that has been on the tree for some time. Notice how the collar is much longer than the live branch collar.

This is an extended collar and the tree is in the process of removing or abscising the branch on its own.

The tree has spent a lot of energy on growing this extended collar and it would be a waste to remove it.

Find where the live bark of the extended collar meets the dead tissue of the branch, that's the place to make the best cut.

Your **A B** of the dead branch is at that point where the live and dead tissues meet. Don't confuse this with leaving a stub, the tree knows best.

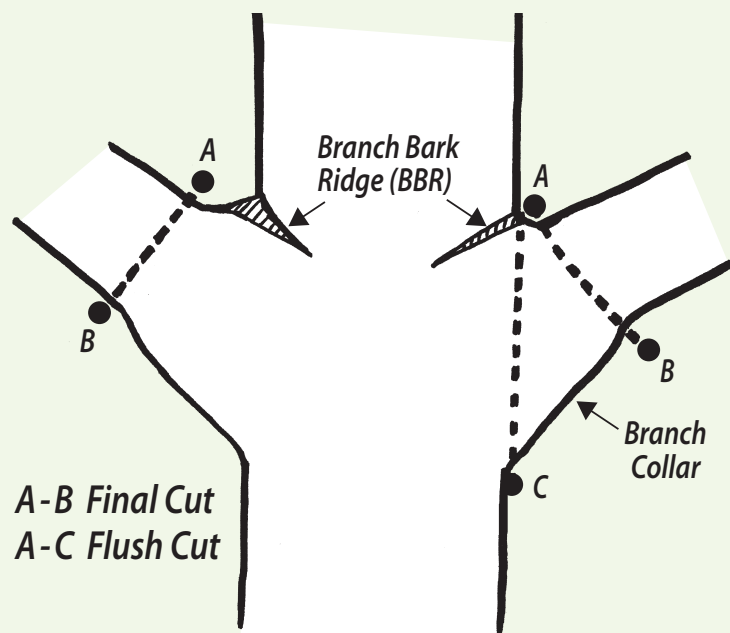


Illustration: Sylvain Joly



Extended branch collar

When making collar cuts always cut the branch off first, leaving a good stub. If you are sure the branch needs to go, then cut it, get it out of the way so you can focus on the correct collar cut. If the branch is too big to control with one hand, make an undercut first, then finish cutting from the top, to guarantee you won't create a tear-out. A tear-out is where the uncontrolled falling branch rips away the bark from the branch, its collar and sometimes the bark of the trunk. It is a loss that a little care in branch removal will prevent.

The worst pruning mistake is a flush cut, a cut made flush with the trunk, ignoring the whole BBR, branch collar concept. This cut creates the largest mass of internal deadwood and is more injurious and a direct cut to the trunk. Why? Because the branch collar is the branch's origin point and also where nature intended for it to be shed, abscised. Cutting through collars, creating flush cuts, is old school and ignores decades of science that prove to us how important branch collars are.

Before you do any pruning, know a little about your tree, what species it is, how it compares to others you have seen, its normal look, the density of this type of tree. These and other questions are good to ponder. Each species has a pattern, a look that is normal. When I prune, I look a lot, I make a cut or two, then stand back and assess what I have done. Look a lot, prune a little, you can't go wrong.



The worst pruning mistake is a flush cut.