

Topping*: (Also called stubbing, heading, tipping, hat-racking, dehorning, or roundover)

! **Topping is not pruning.**
Topping is the indiscriminate removal of branch ends. Topping injures and ultimately results in early failure or death of a tree.

TIP: If the end of the branch must be removed, cut it back to a side branch that is at least one-third (preferably one-half) the diameter of the branch being cut.



Topped tree

Myth: Topping will make the tree easier to maintain.

Truth: Topped trees can regain their original height quickly, often in 2 years. A topped tree will require more attention than a properly pruned tree because of the fast growing, loosely attached shoots that form.



Topped tree with regrowth

Myth: Topping invigorates a tree.

Truth: Topping immediately injures a tree and starts it on a downward spiral. Topping wounds expose the tree to decay and invasion from insects and disease. While a tree may survive topping, its life span will be significantly reduced.

Myth: Topped trees will add value to your property.

Truth: Topped trees lack natural beauty and may actually reduce your property values. Also, a topped tree can become hazardous and cause property damage, making it a liability.



*Adapted, with permission, from the "Experts Agree: Don't Top Your Tree" campaign which was developed by the Missouri Community Forestry Council and Forest ReLeaf of Missouri, with financial assistance currently provided by the Missouri Department of Conservation.