The Arborist Network

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LOPPING

Lopping, also called topping or hatracking, refers to the removal of major portions of a tree crown by cutting branches to stubs and/or to the trunk. Lopping severely injures trees. It sometimes kills them outright.

Why would a tree owner ask to have a tree lopped? There seems to be three main reasons.

A. Concern for safety - possibility of blow down, etc.

B. Misguided intent to save money - a low quote in the absence of a clear definition of pruning methods.

C. Acceptance of the method due to its use by neighbours and the willingness of disreputable firms to perform lopping.

Correctly pruned trees are not often apparent. Thus, the examples of quality tree care frequently go unnoticed while the mutilated victims of lopping serves as the public's standard for tree care.

As a result of lopping, the natural form of the tree is destroyed. Even with restorative pruning, the tree can never be brought back to its original shape. Because of the radical disorganization of physical and chemical processes caused by lopping, even when a tree does not die immediately, its life expectancy is sharply reduced.

Lopping always lowers tree values, frequently by 50% or more. With this in mind, a low quote to lop a tree would be the most expensive when considering the loss of tree value. Lopping NEVER makes a safe tree, it is NEVER the cheapest way to go, it ALWAYS causes more problems.

The issue of quality pruning versus lopping is one of arboriculture concerns, economic consequences and professional ethics. Those who ignore these matters and lop trees assure long term loss to everyone.