CHICAGO REGION TREES INITIATIVE | Our Trees. Our Communities. Our Future.

The Morton Arboretum | THE CHAMPION of TREES

Appendix M: **Oak Pruning and Care**

Oak trees are the most beautiful trees in the neighborhood with their huge canopies and branching limbs, but it takes work to keep an oak healthy and growing strong. An oak left to grow wildly can be unhealthy and full of disease making it in danger of falling. To ensure your oak stays strong and healthy, pruning the dead, diseased, and unruly branches is necessary. Understanding the pruning process makes tree trimming an easy and fun task, and leaves you with a beautiful, healthy oak.

Prune young oaks in mid to late winter, or January through March. Trimming your tree during the winter months allows it to care for its wounds in spring when it will recover more quickly.

- Limit trimming only to dead or broken branches on newly planted trees.

- Two to three years after planting you can begin developmental trimming to shape the tree.

- Learn the growth habits of your particular type of oak tree

Establish a dominant leader branch. To create healthy oak trees that create beautiful shade, you need to develop one dominant branch on the tree. Look at your tree and notice the largest branches. There maybe 2 or even 3 branches that are all large and a similar size to each other. As the tree grows, these will turn into multiple leaders and create a weaker tree.

- Decide which branch looks like it is the most vertical and centered on the trunk and choose that one to be the dominant leader.
- Trim the other branches that may turn into other leaders by reducing their size to allow more sunlight to reach the dominant leader you chose.
- Keep the dominant leader long.

Keep the crown of the tree full. Never remove more that one third of the tree's canopy in a single season. The tree depends on a healthy crown to create food from the sunlight and grow healthy roots in the ground. This is especially important when the tree is young.

Learn More: Here

Additional Resources:

How to Prune Trees and Shrubs.pdf