

6 Ways to Kill Your Tree

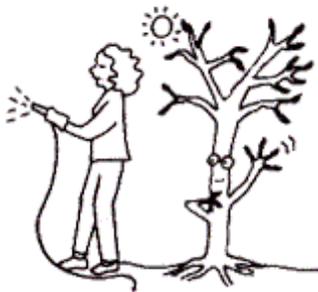
>by Cass Turnbull



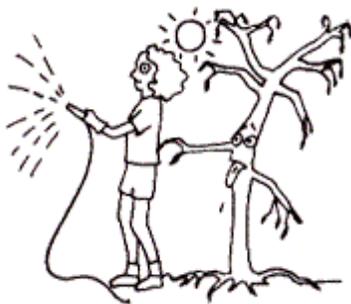
Urban trees live only a fraction of their natural lifespans. A tree that would live 80 years in the forest is expected to live an average of 20 years in the suburbs, and only seven in an urban setting. The most common cause of tree death is abuse and neglect from its number one pest, Homo sapiens.

To prolong the life of your tree, avoid these six most common ways to kill urban trees.

1. DO NOT FORGET TO WATER



... especially during the first two years and during droughts. Water deeply; a long, slow trickle from the hose is good.

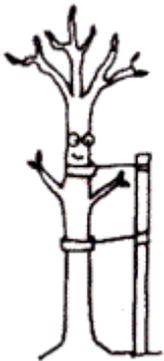


2. DO NOT TRENCH, COVER UP, OR COMPACT THE SOIL IN THE ROOT ZONE.

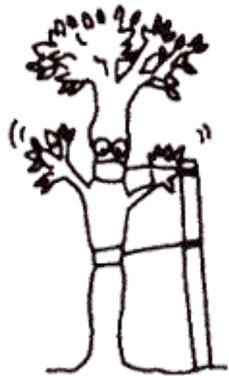


A tree's roots are shallower and broader than generally believed. Tree roots need air and water and empty spaces in the soil.

3. DO NOT LEAVE ON TIP STAKE TIES TO GIRDLE THE TREE.

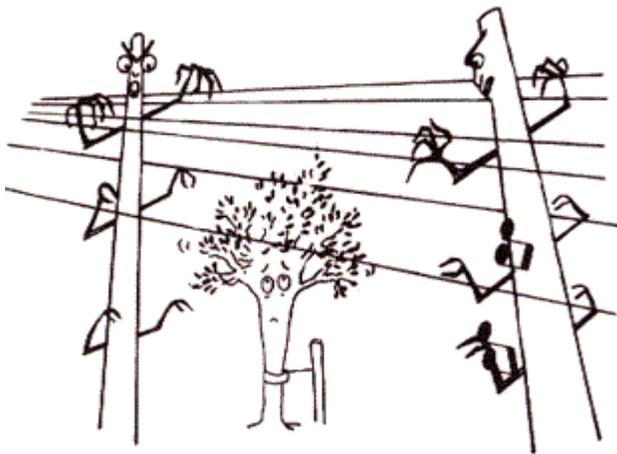


With staking, less is better. Remove ties as soon as the tree can stand on its own-one year, for most trees. Leave stakes to protect from mowers and bumpers for a while longer.



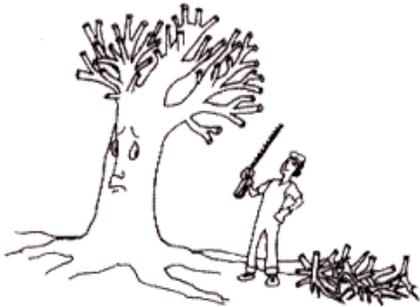
4. DO NOT PLANT A BIG TREE IN A SMALL SPACE.

Find out how tall and wide your tree species gets and give it that much room. Never plant tall trees under wires. This dooms them to mutilation and certain death.



5. DO NOT TOP YOUR TREE OR MAKE REPEATED HEADING CUTS (CUT BRANCH TIPS).

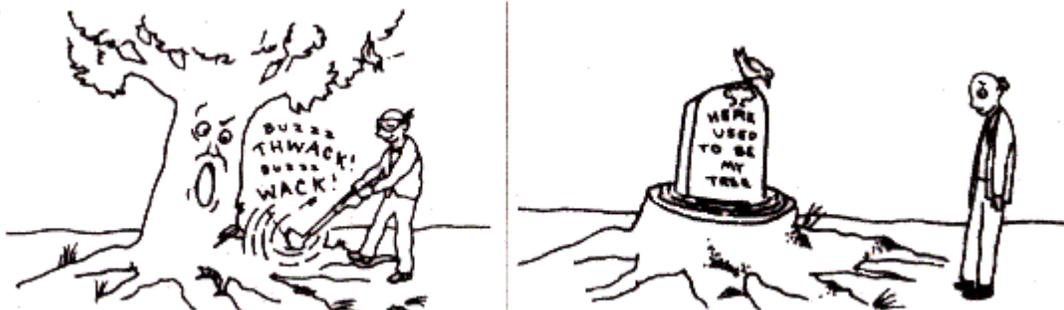
Topping and repeat pruning to keep trees small causes them to rot and starve. Topping removes a tree's nourishment source-the leaves that manufacture its food.



Besides killing the tree, topping or cutting branch tips doesn't even work to keep it small. Ironically, it has the opposite effect: it causes rapid and unruly regrowth which is not only ugly, but significantly weaker than the original limbs.

6. DO NOT WEED-EAT THE BARK OR BASH THE TRUNK WITH THE MOWER.

The most living and vulnerable part of the tree is just under the bark.



Trees die in slow motion, from a series of blows over time. Trees injured during construction generally give out five to ten years after the injury. With a little knowledge we can create a kinder, gentler world for -our friends: the trees.

PlantAmnesty is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting better pruning and gardening. Call (206) 783-9813 for more information on proper care and pruning of trees or shrubs, or write PlantAmnesty, 906 N.W. 87th, Seattle, WA 98117.

For further information on correct pruning of trees, contact a certified arborist, PlantAmnesty or either of the following organizations. The NAA has pruning standards which may be used when soliciting bids from tree-care and landscaping companies. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

International Society of Arboriculture (ISA)

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(217) 328-2032

National Arborist Association (NAA)

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