

Nebraska Forest Service Storm Damage Bulletin No. 5

DON'T TOP TREES

Many trees damaged by severe storms can have large branches broken in the middle by the shear weight of snow or ice. Repairing trees damaged like this is often difficult and more time consuming than the simpler job of "topping" the trees. Topping is a very destructive approach to pruning trees and is **NOT** recommended. Here are some things to consider if a tree worker talks to you about topping your tree.

What is Topping?

Topping is the indiscriminate cutting of large branches back to long stubs. Topping cuts are made without regard to the locations of side branches.

If Topping is Recommended to You

The most appropriate response to a tree worker who recommends topping is to decline their services and look for another tree service. Topping is never recommended by anyone with a good understanding of trees.

What Topping Does

- ❖ Topping removes a major portion of a tree's leaves, which are needed to produce food. This damaging practice can begin an irreversible decline in the tree.
- ❖ Topping makes a tree more susceptible to insect pests and diseases by reducing the ability of the tree to produce chemical defenses.
- ❖ Branches left after topping become decayed and create a hazardous situation that may cause serious injury or property damage if the branch breaks.
- ❖ Cuts made by topping stimulate the development of many epicormic shoots (water-sprouts) just below the cut, which are weakly attached and are easily broken off in storms.
- ❖ Topping destroys the natural form of a tree and wastes money.