SAVE THIS INSERT...SAVE YOUR SABAL PALMS

PROTECT FLORIDA'S VULNERABLE STATE TREE - NO OVER-PRUNING

A Harmful and Unnecessary Practice

The Sabal Palm

Sabal Palmetto

Consider the Impacts of Over-Pruning

- **Sabal Palms** (commonly known as cabbage palms) are self-pruning palms, shedding dead fronds in high winds. They have survived hurricanes, droughts, fires and floods, enriched the soil and adapted to coastal and inland environments for thousands of years. Their spring flowers and winter berries are vitally important to the survival of migratory birds and Florida's indigenous wildlife species. (It is OK to remove fruiting structures at some point, because they do become safety hazards near traffic areas after awhile.)
- **Cutting healthy green fronds** steals the palms' source of nutrients, permanently stunts growth, invites disease and reduces the palms' natural resilience to high winds.
- **Over-pruned palms** develop bottleneck trunks. In high winds and hurricanes this stressed and weakened point will cause the palm to break off and die.
- **Pruning of protective green fronds** makes the palm's heart cold-sensitive and susceptible to winter frosts and freezes.
- **Over-pruning** causes native and migratory songbirds, woodpeckers, butterflies, honey bees, tree frogs, bats, anoles, squirrels, and other wildlife to lose valuable food, shelter and nesting area.
- **Work boots and climbing spikes** create wounds in the trunk leaving the palm prone to disease.

*Acceptable Pruning | Harsh Pruning | Long Term Effects

You Can Make A Difference

- **Do not cut green fronds.**
- **Say NO to landscapers** who want to prune green fronds. Exclude annual over-pruning from your landscape contract.
- **Keep lawn mowers, weed eaters and chain saws away from the trunk.** These wounds are permanent and allow disease to enter the palm.
- **Mulch around palms** to conserve water and keep out weeds, eliminating the need for weed eaters.
- **Enjoy your landscape,** add fallen fronds to your compost or brush pile for wildlife. Fronds make rich soil for use in garden beds!
- **Work together** to save and protect our valuable sabal palm, an integral part of Florida's ecosystems.
- **Help spread the facts.** Copy this information to help educate others!

*Though not necessary, it is acceptable to prune brown and yellow fronds hanging below an imaginary horizon line. Pole pruners work best. Prune stems away from the trunk.
Green fronds should not be pruned.

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Most of this information was obtained from a brochure created by Amy Mosher and friends in an effort to save Florida's natural landscape, and supported by Central Florida Palm Cycad Society and the Florida Native Plant Society.

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SAVE THIS INSERT...SAVE YOUR TREES

DON'T TOP TREES!

Properly Pruned Live Oak

Never cut main branches back to stubs. The sight of topped (or hatracked) trees is all too common in the communities and along the roadways of America – trunks with stubby limbs standing naked in the landscape, trees stripped of all dignity and grace. Trees are often topped because they grow into utility wires, interfere with views or solar collectors, or simply grow so large that they worry the landowner. But as one arborist has said, "Topping is the absolute worst thing you can do for the health of your tree."

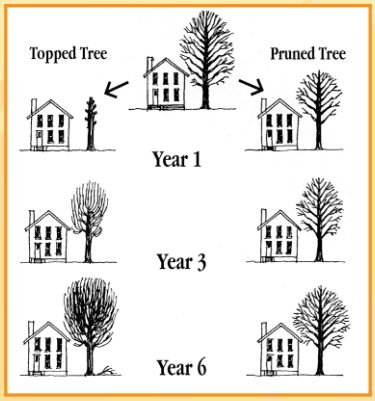
from the TREE CITY USA® BULLETIN

WHY NOT TO TOP: 8 GOOD REASONS

- **Starvation:** Topping removes so much of the tree's leafy crown that it dangerously reduces the tree's food-making ability.
- **Shock:** By removing the protective cover of the tree's canopy, bark tissue is exposed to the direct rays of the sun. The resulted scalding can cause the tree's death.
- **Insect and Disease:** The large exposed ends of topped limbs are highly vulnerable to insect invasion or decay fungi spores.
- **Weak Limbs:** The numerous branch sprouts that grow from topped limbs are weakly attached. They tend to break as they grow larger, especially when they are subjected to high winds. They also compete with each other for nutrients, to where they stunt each other's growth unless you do additional pruning.
- **Rapid New Growth:** Instead of controlling the height and spread of the tree, topping has the opposite effect. New branches are more numerous and often grow higher than before.
- **Tree Death:** Some tree species can't tolerate major branch loss and still survive. At best, they remain weak and disease-prone.
- **Ugliness:** A topped tree is a disfigured tree. Even with new growth, it never regains the grace and character of its species.
- **Cost:** The true cost of topping is often hidden – lower property values, expense of removal and replacement if the tree dies.

Proper Pruning – The Alternative to Topping

This illustration shows the difference between the end results of topping and doing proper reduction cuts. When a decision is made to reduce the size of an older tree, use proper reduction cuts. Although the speed of and nature of regrowth will depend on species and local factors, any comparison between irresponsible topping and competent pruning will be dramatic.



YEAR 1: The topped tree is an ugly stub and a remnant of a once lovely tree. If pruned properly, the tree's size is reduced but form and beauty are retained.

YEAR 3: Vigorous sprouts have sprung out of the topped tree in large numbers and are growing with abnormal rapidity. The pruned tree adds growth, but it does so more slowly and distributes it more normally.

YEAR 6: In a relatively short time, the topped tree is as tall – and far bushier and more dangerous – than it was to begin with. The properly pruned tree is safer, more beautiful, and its size is better controlled.

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Arbor Day Foundation™