

## Professional tree maintenance

Tree maintenance comprises all actions aimed at supporting the optimal development of a tree and maintaining or restoring public safety. It is essential to ensure that a crown formation appropriate for the tree species is preserved. The implementation of tree maintenance measures is specified in guidelines and regulations.

**Professional** crown pruning eliminates undesirable development, such as rubbing branches and optimises the development of the tree. There is an imminent danger that the removal of limbs could result in the permeation of fungus into the wound where the tree was topped causing permanent damage to the tree.



Crossing and rubbing branches: Professional pruning is essential

## Literature

ZTV - Baumpflege: Zusätzliche Technische Vertragsbedingungen und Richtlinien für Baumpflege (FLL, 2001)

Arbolex - Das digitale Fachwörterbuch der Baumpflege (Klug, Hrsg., 2004)

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## Preserve your trees!

Trees are highly developed plants and belong to the largest living organisms. Trees are living things. Trees are an essential part of our habitat. They serve a multitude of useful functions for us human beings.

Do not permit your trees to be

- mutilated
- pruned unprofessionally
- destroyed by any other means (e.g. construction work).

**Protect and preserve your trees.  
Consult a professional arborist!**

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**It's a myth  
that these trees...**



**...will lose  
fewer leaves...**

**...or will be less hazardous!**

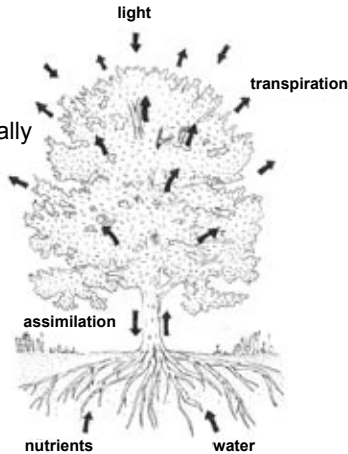
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## Tree functions

### Life of trees

In **every tree** an equilibrium between the root, trunk and crown prevails. Each of these tree components plays an equally significant part in the survival of the tree. Trees constantly adapt to stress and are thus in a position to balance static weakness by means of increased localised growth. This system can only function as long as the different parts of the tree are not subject to starvation.



### Value of trees

Trees in urban areas improve and enhance our habitat (both structurally and aesthetically). However, they also possess a high monetary value.

## The reason for topping trees

Topping a tree means the indiscriminate and unnecessary cutting or reduction of the crown or parts of the crown to short stubs.

A frequent reason for topping trees is that the owners think (or have been told), this is the appropriate way of tree maintenance. The owners are convinced that they are doing the right thing for the tree. Or they imagine the tree will become less hazardous or lose fewer leaves in autumn due to this procedure.

## The consequences of topping trees

### Lack of nutrition

If a large part of the crown is removed from a tree, the tree is also robbed of the possibility of obtaining adequate nutrition and as a consequence will starve. The natural equilibrium between root and crown is destroyed and serious wounds are also inflicted upon the tree. As a consequence the tree will exhibit symptoms of starvation at the point where it has been topped.

### Decay

Fungi can easily penetrate the tree through the wounds caused by topping and damage the wood.

### Unstable crown

A tree which has been topped will try to restore the equilibrium between root and crown by producing multiple shoots (shoots which grow vertically or in an upward direction), these



*Fig. above:* Fungi enter the tree at the point of topping and cause disintegration of wood



*Fig. right:* Formation of primary shoots following topping

shoots are usually unstable and will compete with each other. The continuous growth of the shoots and the process of decay pervading the wound caused by topping could easily cause the shoots to break off.

### The tree will become a safety hazard!

### Enormous subsequent costs

Topping trees destroys the natural equilibrium of the tree. Complicated maintenance action will then be required. The subsequent costs for the owner of the tree will be considerable.



*Fig:* Lack of Nutrition. The area surrounding the point of topping will be starved of nutrition and will die (=starvation point). Decay can enter the tree.

### Leaf formation

Substantial leaf growth will occur as a result of the strong growth of the new shoots. This is essential for the survival of the tree and topping has proved to be counterproductive.

### Aesthetic features

A tree loses its specific crown formation after topping. It will never attain the beauty of a tree which has grown naturally.

## Topping trees is destructive

According to the current regulations, topping trees cannot be regarded as a maintenance measure. If the action is carried out in spite of these guidelines, the perpetrating company will be subject to **liability to damages**.

Topping trees does not make a tree less hazardous, in actual fact, it increases the danger of breakage within a few years. It is also a misconception that topped trees produce fewer leaves.

In communities with legislation pertaining to tree protection, topping trees is a clear breach of these regulations. The action could lead to a regulatory offence procedure against the company carrying out this action and the owner of the tree.

