

Q: I have a box elder tree that is hanging over the street in front of my home that must be pruned back. Can I safely do that this time of year?

A: Summer pruning can be done on most trees if it is done carefully, keeping in mind that you are removing the leaves that provide the sugars and carbohydrates that the tree needs to store to make it through the winter months. In other words, be cautious and remove only what you need to. Summer pruning will slow a tree's growth as well, which is sometimes desirable in urban settings. Keep in mind that removing foliage and smaller limbs will often open up the canopy allowing sunburn to occur on interior limbs. Once bark is sunburned, it is much more susceptible to insect and disease problems. Pruning only one side of a tree that can also be problematic, as at this time of year the limbs are moisture laden and heavy with foliage. Be sure to balance the pruning if possible all around the canopy. Box elder (*Acer negundo*) grows rapidly and tolerates pruning well but the wood is relatively brittle. Follow good pruning instructions: prune back to a sprout that is growing in a desired, outward direction; do not leave stubs longer than 4-5- cm (3/4"); do not coat pruning cuts with anything but good wishes. This tree has sap that has been used as a sugar source, but it is reported not as high quality as Sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*)

Q: I want to top my redwood trees that are about 30 feet tall. What time of year is best?

A: There is no time of year when I can recommend topping redwood trees (*Sequoia sempervirens*). A 30 foot redwood is still in its infancy, and beheading it is neither kind nor aesthetic. If you have overhead wires that are interfering with the tree's growth, perhaps you should consider removing the trees and planting an evergreen that will not get as tall. If you must top the trees, it is better to do this in the winter months when the trees are not actively growing. Removing the tops of the trees in the summer months will put the trees under considerable stress. If you don't have the option of waiting till winter, make sure that the trees are getting watered throughout the rootzone on a regular basis, so that drought stress doesn't compound the problem. The ground is very dry early this year since we received so little rain, and redwoods, which are native to areas that get coastal fog, are already showing signs stress. The following site lists a number of trees that are smaller and might be worth considering as replacements:  
<http://ucce.ucdavis.edu/files/filelibrary/5253/30229.pdf>