

Execution: Thinning does not influence the size or shape of the tree. Thinning should result in an even distribution of branches along individual limbs, not a grouping toward the ends. Do this by removing some of the branches from the edge of the canopy, **not from the interior!** Caution must be taken not to create an effect known as lion tailing, which is caused by removing an excessive number of interior laterals and foliage. This displaces foliar weight to the ends of the branches and may result in sunburned bark tissue, watersprouts, reduced branch taper, weakened branch structure, and breakage. Before thinning, first, clean the canopy, then proceed with thinning as follows.

Do not remove more than about 15 to 20% of the live foliage on a mature tree at one time or sprouting may result. Often 5 to 10% is enough on mature trees. Excessive sprouting can be an indication that the tree was over-pruned. Up to about 25% of the live foliage can be thinned from young trees. Provided you did not remove more than this amount of live foliage while cleaning the canopy, prune small branches from the edge of the canopy. A handsaw or small chain saw is usually the appropriate tool for this job; taking a large chain saw to do this work in the tree can tempt the arborist to remove large diameter branches which would be inappropriate. Thinning is a delicate process that removes small diameter (usually 1-2 inch) branches. Remove those growing parallel and close to nearby branches or those competing for the same space in the canopy. Appropriately thinned trees may not look like they were pruned.

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