

# ask the landscape professional

Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs



## Welcome to my weekly series!

Feel free to send me questions you'd like to have me answer and I will do my best to address the ones of most general interest. **Email or mail your questions to:**

**info@sprigsandtwigs.net or Linda Lillie, Sprigs & Twigs Inc, PO Box 245, Gales Ferry, CT 06335**

**Question of the Week:** *We have just moved into new home and the previous owner had one of the trees "topped". He told us it would invigorate the tree and make it less susceptible to falling on the house in a storm. Do you agree with him?*



**A**bsolutely not, the previous owner was completely wrong! There is nothing more destructive to a tree than "topping" it. Not only does it look terrible, but once a tree is topped it starts a death spiral for the tree and it will surely die or fail. All of the wounds on the tree open up many disease and decay sites that will overwhelm the tree's natural defenses. Also, the loss of so much of the tree's canopy and leaf cover deprives the tree of its primary source of food and it will "starve", the roots will weaken and the tree will be more susceptible to uprooting or breakage. The tree bark also needs shade and without the leaves, it will get scalded and damaging sunburn. Once a tree is topped, fast growing, long and weak "water sprouts" start growing which is the tree's way of trying to replace the wood that was cut away when it was topped. The structure of the tree removed by topping never grows back; it is replaced by these upward growing water sprouts. (See lower picture)

Not only does this make an ugly looking tree, but it is actually more, not less, susceptible to storm damage than before it was topped.

Unfortunately this homeowner's only choice is to remove this tree and replant another one.

Don't let any tree company that offers to top a tree or advertises that they top trees, anywhere near your property! A reputable tree company and a CT licensed arborist will NEVER, EVER top a tree. There are proper ways to prune trees to reduce susceptibility to storm damage without harming the tree. Remember, as I wrote about several weeks ago, in Connecticut it is against the law to hire anyone other than an arborist licensed by CT State DEEP.

If you have any questions or concerns about proper tree care, give us a call, we are happy to help.



**Ugly, Weak Water Sprouts Growing in a Topped Tree**

# Sprigs & Twigs

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Linda K. Lillie is the President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc, the premier landscape tree care & lawn care company in SE Connecticut for the last 17 years. She is a 1995 graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation work.

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