



# Ice Storm 1998

Information Sheet #8 February 27, 1998  
USDA Forest Service, Durham, NH



## Helping Trees Recover From Ice Storms

The unprecedented ice storm of 1998 damaged forests and urban trees throughout New York and northern New England. Ice coatings of up to several inches thick added tons of extra weight to individual trees. Stems and branches broke, while some trees were completely bent over. Hardwoods appear to be affected most, from young trees to mature trees with large crowns. The ice storm killed some trees, but many of those that are damaged can survive. There are some things that can be done to help damaged trees recover.

***Caution:** Homeowners working on their trees need to use extreme caution. Removing large trees or limbs can be dangerous. Do not climb a ladder with a chain saw, do not climb into a damaged tree, and never touch any tree near electrical wires. Assess your particular tree situation carefully and watch for safety hazards. Most tree work needs to be done by professional arborists, especially when the work requires climbing or the tree is leaning against another tree or structure.*

**Assess immediate hazards first:** Remove dead trees, trees or branches that are leaning, trees with broken or cracked stems, trees with extensive broken roots, and any large, dead, or broken limbs that are still attached to the tree. Landowners of large acreage may want to wait until a damage assessment has been completed before salvaging forest stands. Over time damaged trees may have a higher incidence of decay and discoloration.



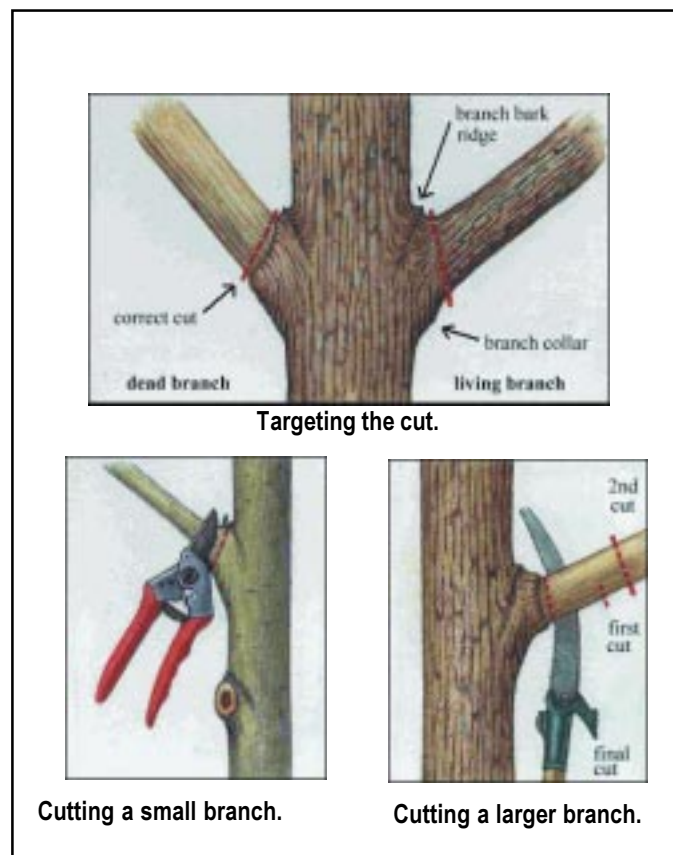
**Hire an arborist:** Hire a qualified arborist to get the work done properly and safely. Trained arborists are aware of proper pruning and removal procedures and can reduce the chance of further damage to the tree. Check to see that they are certified and ask for certificates of insurance, including proof of liability for personal and property damage and worker's compensation. Also, request local references and get more than one estimate.

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**Prevent additional damage:** Later, you may want to prune the damaged trees to improve appearance and reduce additional hazards. If the top has been broken, the tree should be pruned back to a strong lateral branch. Damaged branches should be pruned back to the branch collar (see illustration below).

Some damage may not be immediately apparent. Hidden cracks may cause branches to droop when leaves come out in the spring. Stem decay, as well as cracks, may lead to structural loss, causing the tree or large branches to become hazardous. Root damage may not be evident until twigs or branches in the upper crown begin dying after two or three growing seasons. Stressed, dying, and dead trees attract insect pests, such as borers and bark beetles. Remove insect-infested trees to reduce risk to healthy trees nearby.

*Proper pruning illustration  
from "How to Prune Trees"  
prepared by the USDA Forest  
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(NA-FR-01-95).*



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***Don't Panic! Stop, Think and Be Patient.***

***Safety First and Foremost.***

***Get Professional Advice.***



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