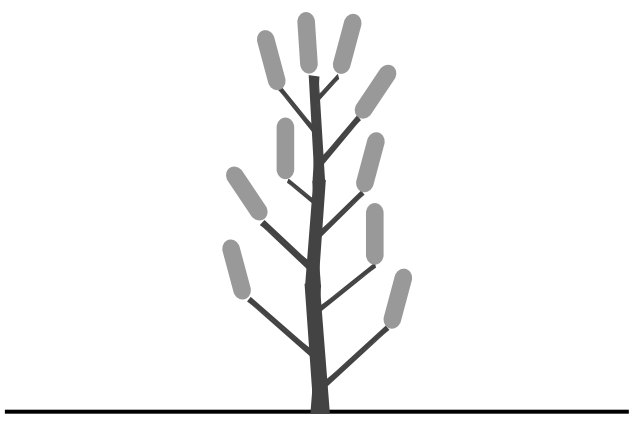
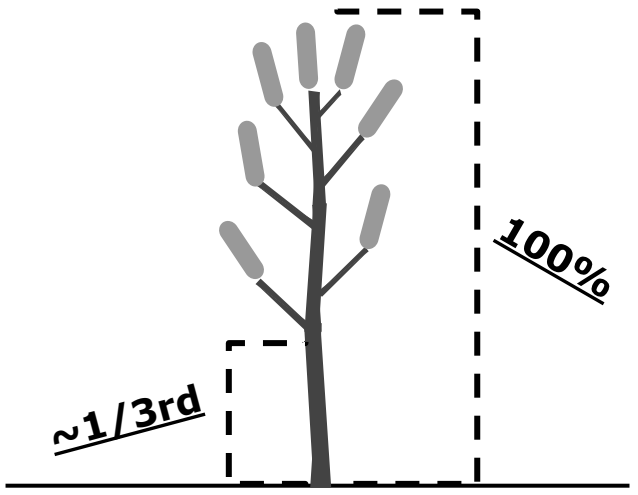
Tree Training Large Shrubs



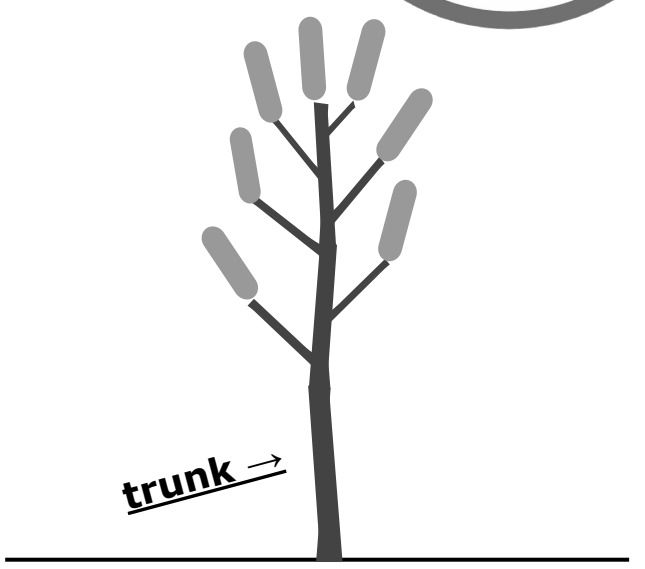
0. Starting Shrub

Should ideally have a naturally mostly upright habit, ideally with a single leader to become the trunk.



1. Initial Train

Remove growth from the lowest 1/3rd of the specimen.



2. Training the Trunk

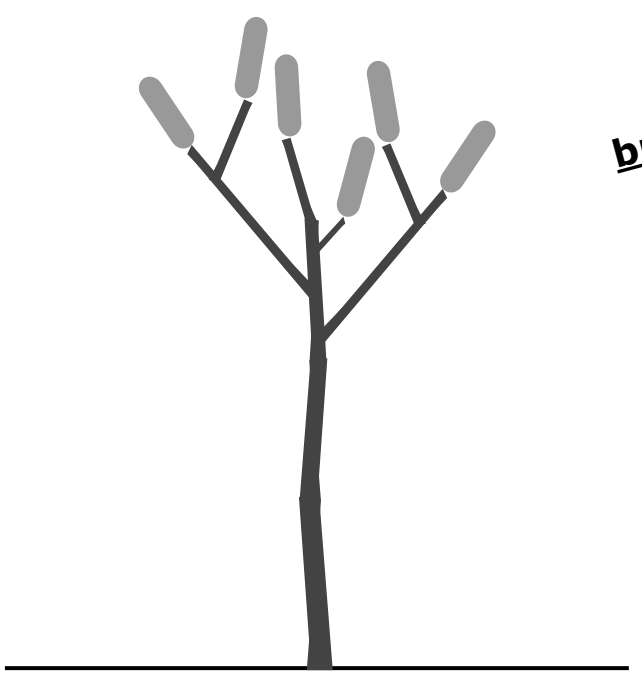
Remove all trunk sprouts & root suckers & maintain growth from the lowest 1/3rd of the specimen as it grows.

Prune off any downward pointed growth, so as to promote upward growth.

Leave lower growth on until ~1/2 - 3/4 inch in diameter, or less for more smooth barked specimens.
By slowly raising the canopy in this manner, a more sturdy, tapered trunk is developed.

Avoid staking if possible, & if necessary, use a two or three stake setup, & not a single stake against the trunk.

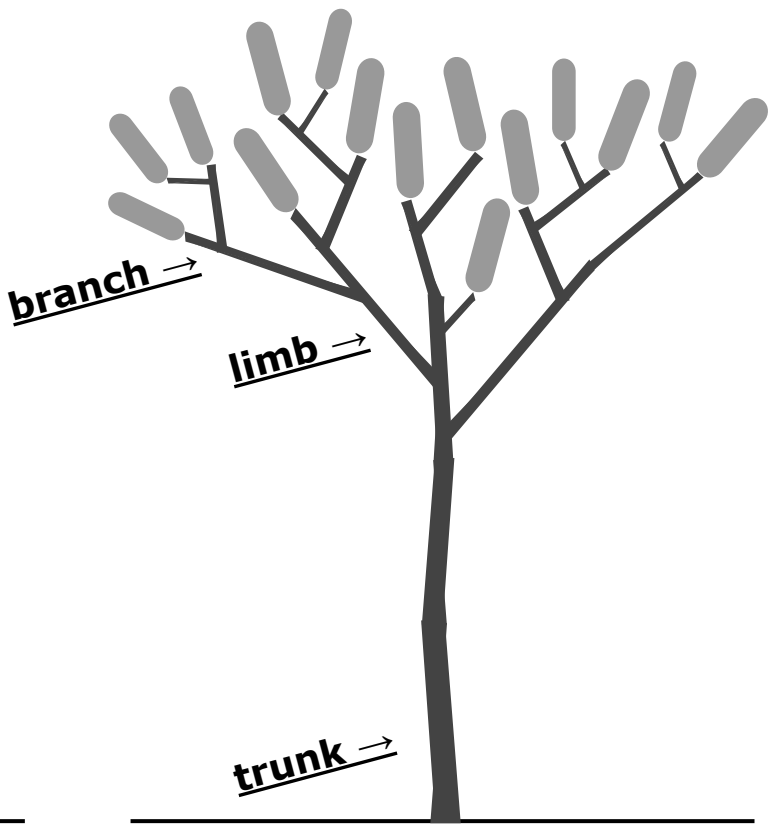
The trunk should be allowed to safely move in the wind, as that helps to develop strength in the trunk against the wind.



3. Training Limbs

Consider where the limbs will be in order to structurally hold the canopy. Clean up to the lowest limbs.

Avoid allowing crossing branches in the canopy as they may rub in wounds into each other.



4. Maintaining Tree Form

Basically combine steps 2 & 3, by removing all trunk sprouts & root suckers; while also pruning crossing, rubbing, & downward growing branches. Avoid “topping” as this can develop an excessively dense canopy that can whip well in strong winds.

Notes regarding training large shrubs into smaller scale trees:

1. The rate at which one must prune is dependant upon the species that is being trained. Faster growing species will need more pruning more often in order to effectively train into a decent small tree, & slower growing species will need it less often.
2. When selecting woody plants to train into small trees, look for strong specimens with ideal characteristics; such as a straight, dominant leader (to become a single trunk) or well-spaced & equally distributed to-be trunks for multiples. Be sure to identify the foot (where the trunk becomes the topmost roots), as that should be exposed atop the soil just like any other tree.
3. Pruning of living materials causes damage, inflicts stress, & begins an internal response to close & replace severed materials. This also creates potential entry points for pests &/or pathogens; & increases water & soil nutrition use for many plant life. Minimizing pruning can help to mitigate the plant’s stress & their potential for disease infections &/or pest infestations.
4. Very sharp hand pruners should be used for virtually all smaller growth, & folding hand saws are ideal for woody growth over an inch in diameter. Both should be sharpened prior to use, & ought to be carefully but thoroughly be cleaned of plant material & washed if not sanitized between pruning specimens, especially when disease is suspected.
5. Shrubs can be trained into trees when grown in containers or when planted, though it may be better to install & then to train into trees, should already tree trained specimens in containers not be available or an option.