

# National Arborist Association

Fax: 1-603-314-5386

Contact: Robert Rouse, Staff Arborist  
3 Perimeter Rd. - Unit 1  
Manchester, NH 03103  
1-800-733-2622



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Palm Pruning: Do it right!**

Pruning is key to caring for your palms properly. Palms can be killed if over-pruned or “shaved.” According to Robert Rouse, staff arborist for the National Arborist Association (NAA), “The most common mistake people make when pruning palms is loving them to death. They want their palm to look healthy by getting rid of dead, drooping, or old leaves (fronds) and removing frond bases from the trunk.” Rouse cautions, “What many consumers don’t realize is that removing too many fronds is over-pruning and can kill the palm. The palm needs its fronds, even the older ones, to produce food in order to grow.” How do you know the proper way to prune palms? Rouse recommends asking your tree care company to follow the American National Standard for pruning trees, called ANSI A300 Part 1 *Pruning* or simply the *A300 pruning standard*.

**Here are some common palm pruning myths, and the truth about each myth according to A300 pruning standards:**

**Wrong:** Using tree climbing spikes does not damage a palm.

**Right:** Palms should not be spiked when pruning. The spikes damage the palm’s trunk and provide entry points for diseases that could kill your palm.

**Wrong:** All drooping fronds should be removed.

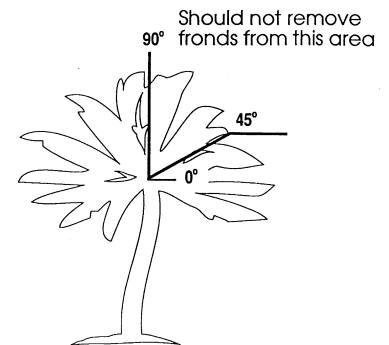
**Right:** Dead or dying fronds should be removed. It is best to leave healthy fronds when possible. If you must remove healthy fronds, do not remove fronds that grow at a 45 degree angle or greater from the horizontal. When pruning is finished, the palm fronds remaining should droop over enough to reach an imaginary horizontal plane, drawn from the growing point.

**Wrong:** Palm fronds must be shaved (peeled) immediately in order to have a complete pruning job.

**Right:** Do not shave freshly pruned frond bases. This can damage the trunk allowing diseases to attack your palm. Instead, limit shaving (peeling) to the old, dead frond bases. Cuts should be close to the trunk but not so close that the trunk is damaged or “nicked.”

**Wrong:** Palms fronds must be cut flush with the trunk.

**Right:** Palm fronds should be cut as close as possible to the trunk, but not so close that the trunk is damaged by the pruning, however, a large frond stub should not remain.



**How do I know if my palm has been over-pruned?** After pruning the palm will have a rooster-tail appearance since only upright pointing fronds remain. Later, the growth of a palm will be slowed. During this period of slower growth the trunk grows narrow, creating a “bottle-neck” appearance. If the palm survives, trunk growth will eventually widen once again, creating thick and narrow sections of trunk. To find out more visit the NAA web-site at [www.natlarb.com](http://www.natlarb.com)