Pruning Young Trees

Illustrations and photos by Edward F. Gilman, Professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, IFAS, University of Florida

Preventive Pruning: young trees

- Set objectives
- Determine pruning cycle and dose
- **Execute pruning plan**
  - make good cuts
  - prioritize trees with structural issues
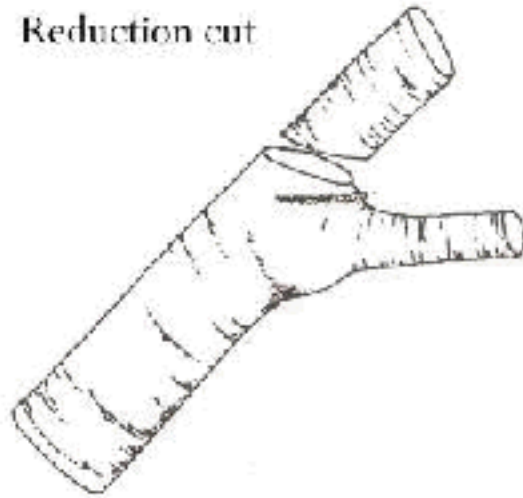 - temporary vs. permanent branch management

Types of pruning cuts:

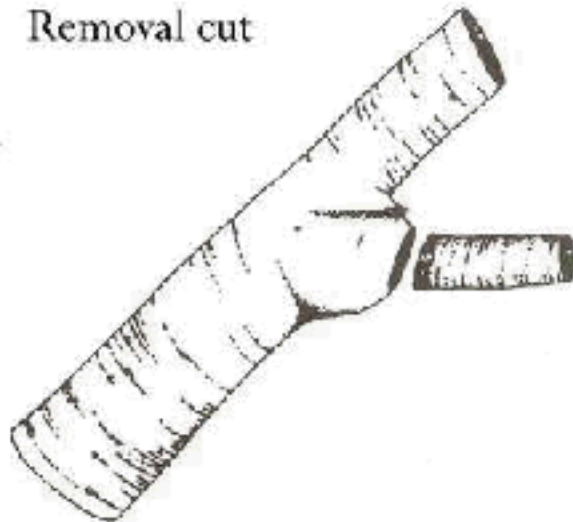**Reduction cut** shortens the length of a stem by pruning back to a smaller limb.

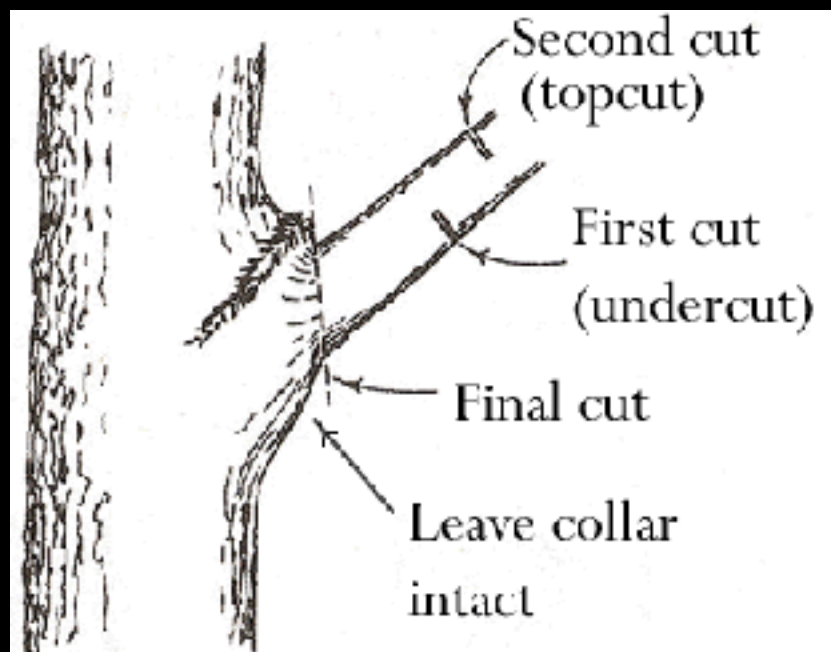**Removal cut** prunes a branch back to the trunk or parent branch.

Reduction cut

Removal cut

Make good pruning cuts

Second cut (topcut)

First cut (undercut)

Final cut

Leave collar intact

Step 1

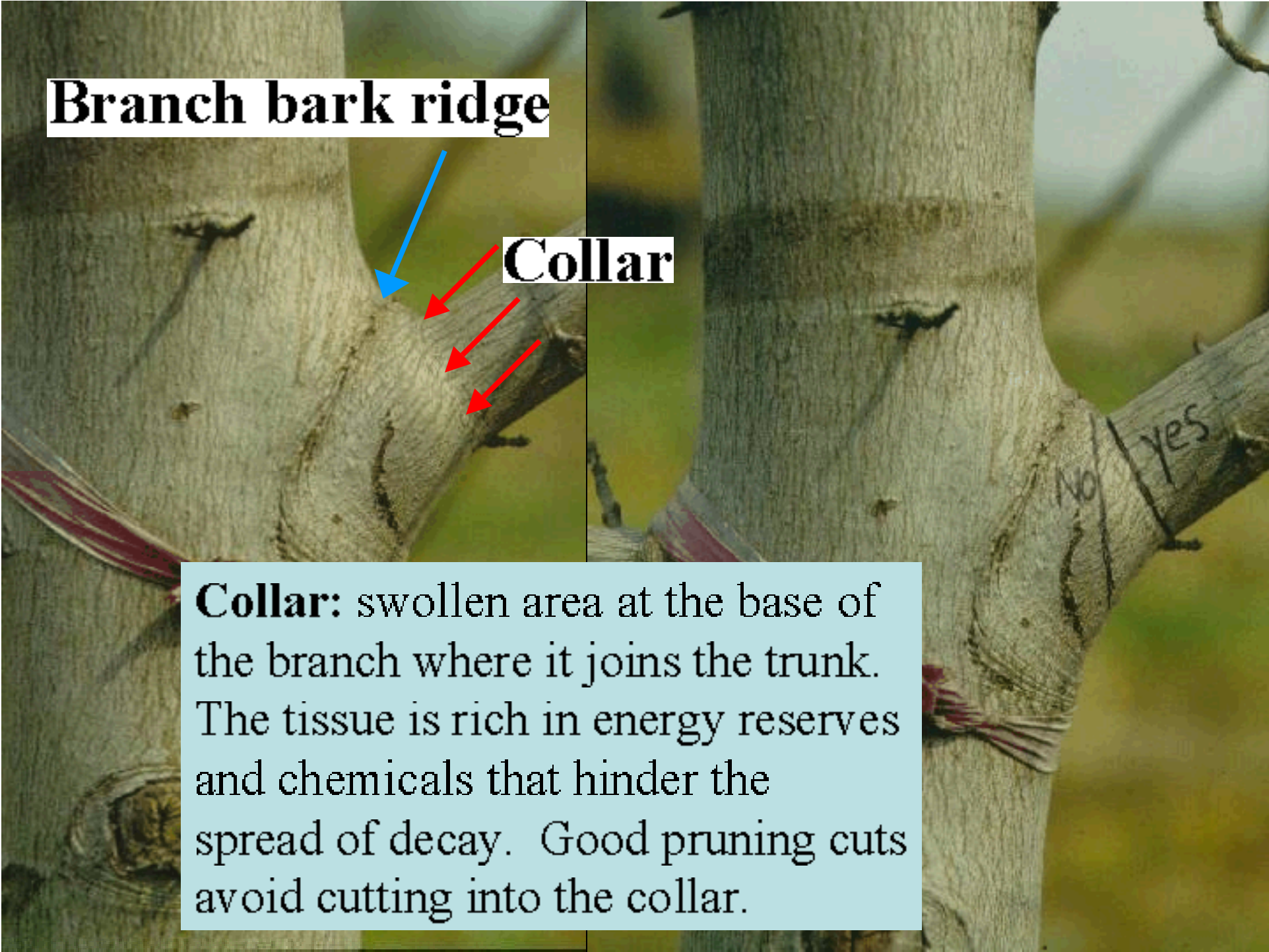Make an undercut about 12 inches from the trunk.

Step 2

Make a topcut farther out on the limb.

Step 3

Remove the stub with final cut, being careful not to cut flush against the trunk. Leave the collar intact.
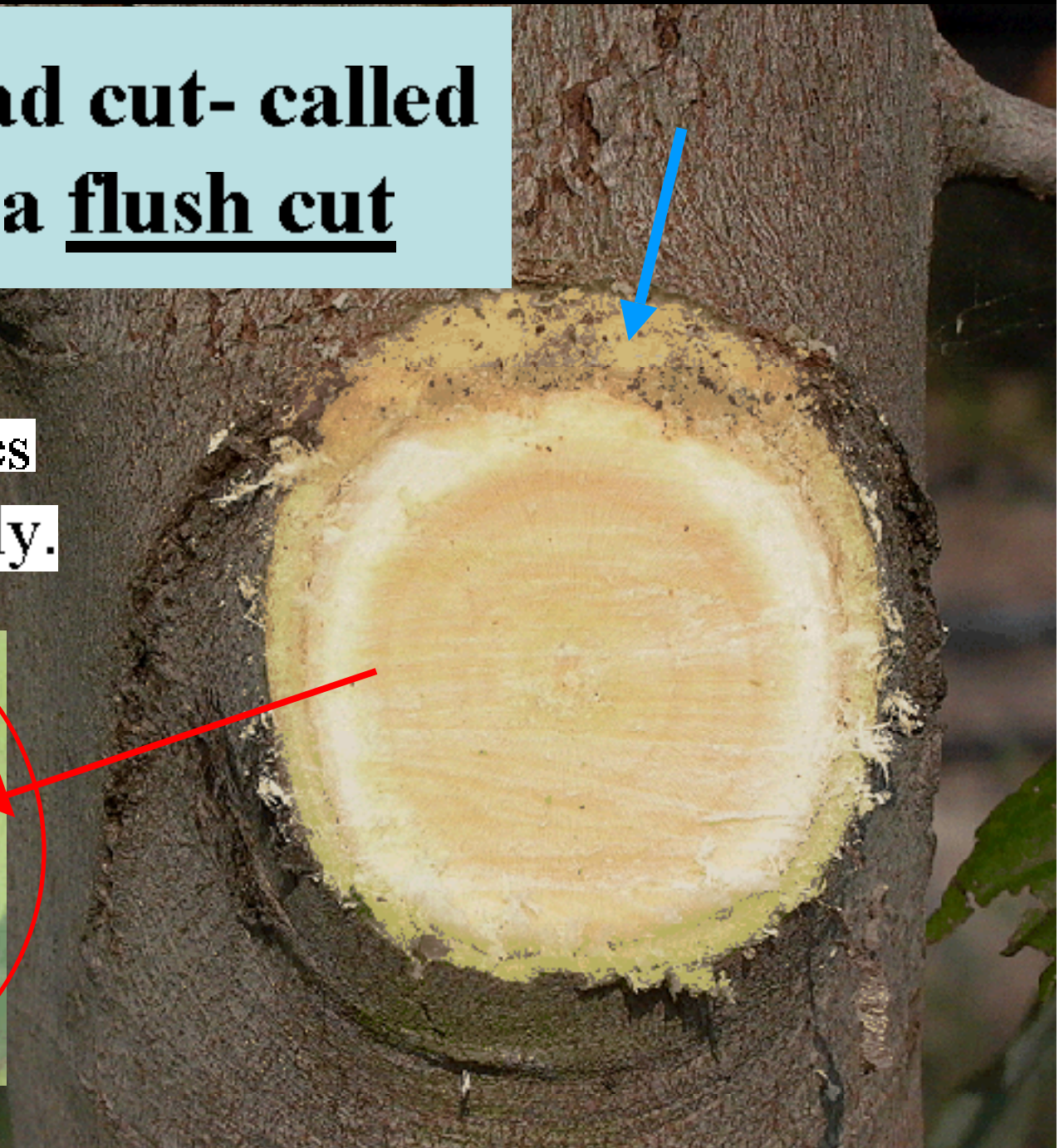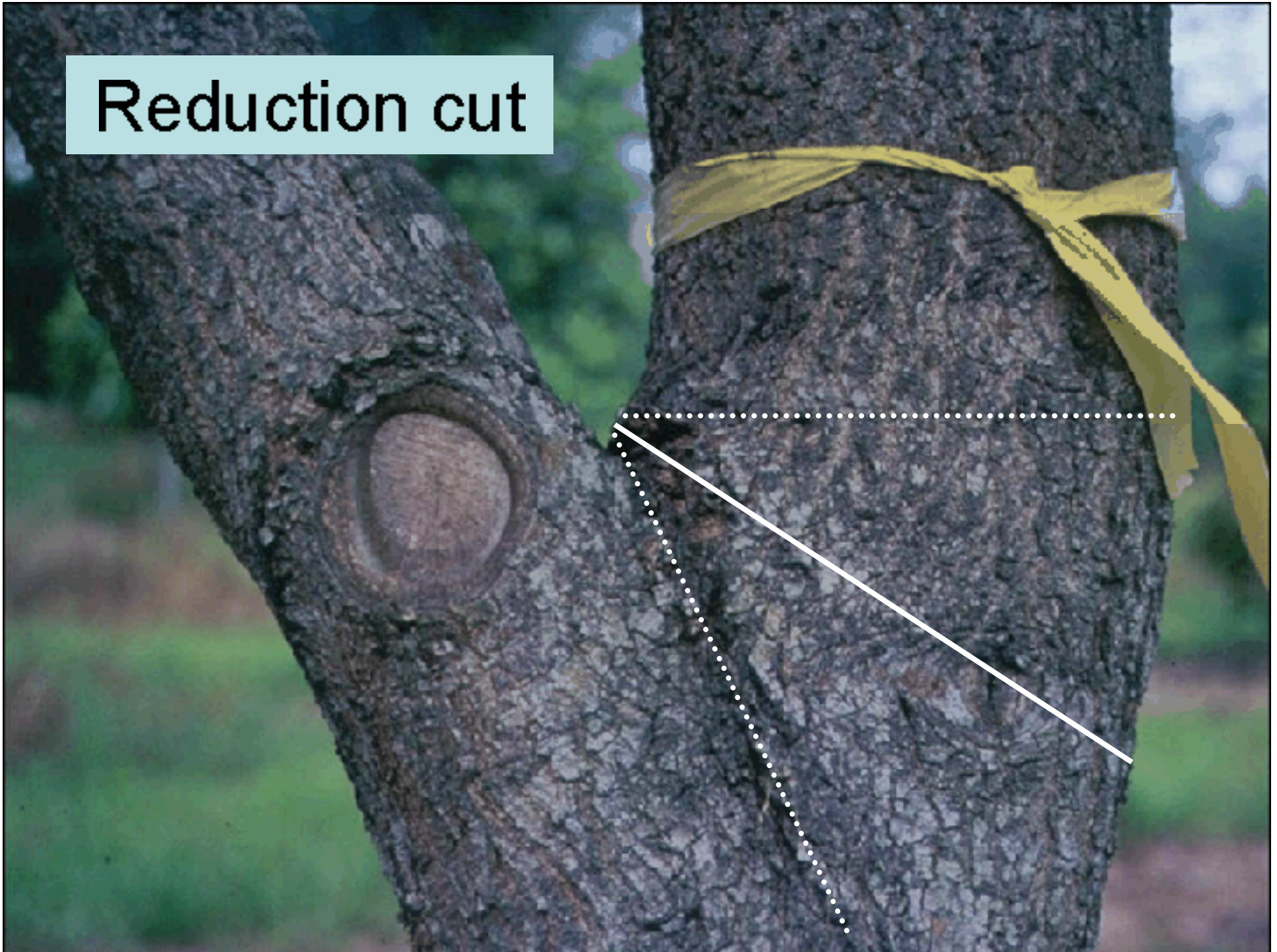
Branch bark ridge

Collar

Collar: swollen area at the base of the branch where it joins the trunk. The tissue is rich in energy reserves and chemicals that hinder the spread of decay. Good pruning cuts avoid cutting into the collar.

Bad cut- called a flush cut

Wound wood does not develop evenly.

Reduction cut

Pruning strategies

- Execution
  - Prioritize which trees to prune
  - Decide location of lowest permanent limb
    temporary branch management vs. permanent branch management

Prioritize:

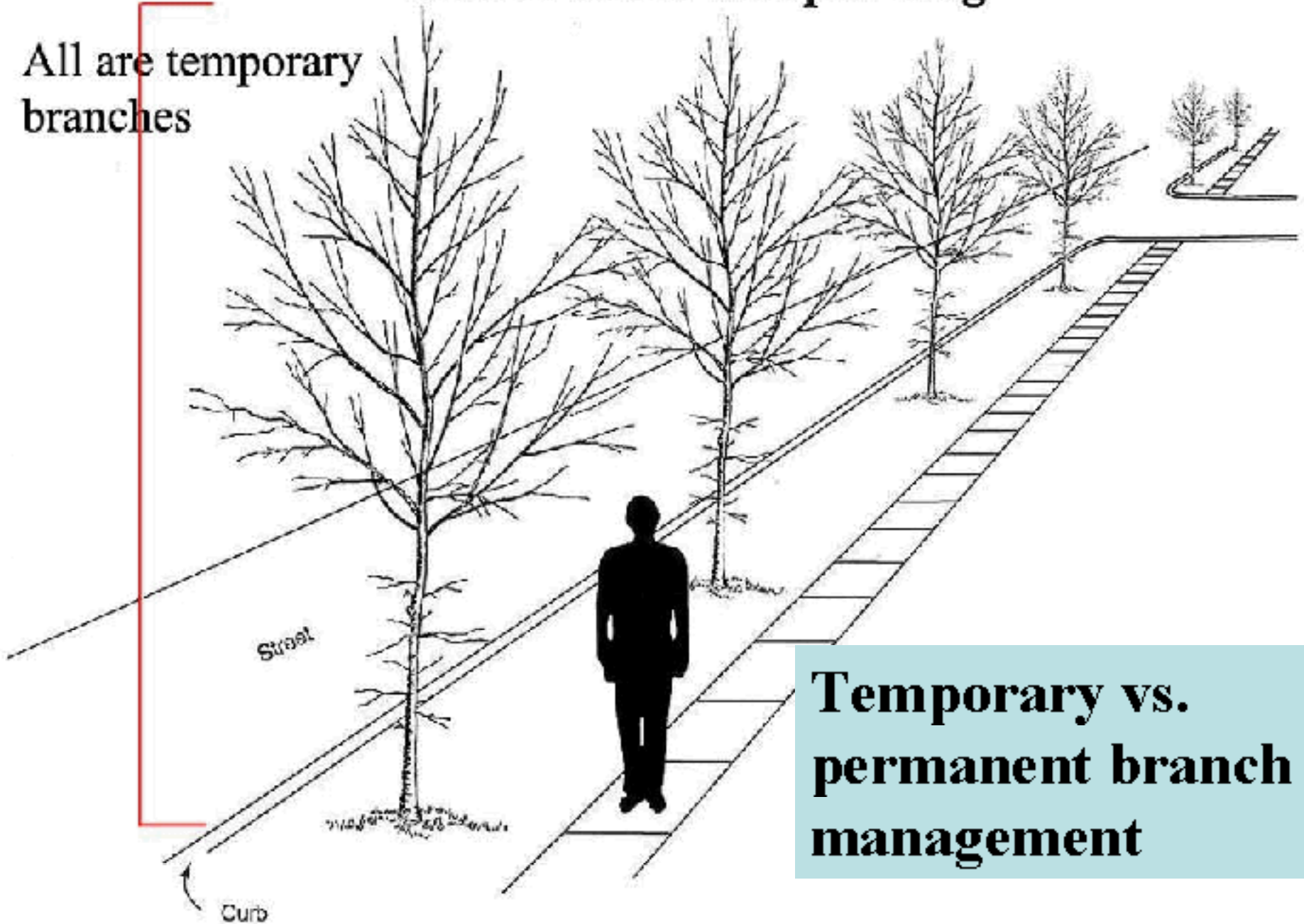## Structural pruning not as important on these

Temporary vs. permanent branch management

Keep in mind that all branches will eventually be removed on trees less than 4'' caliper

Recent street tree planting

All are temporary branches

Street

Curb

Temporary vs. permanent branch management
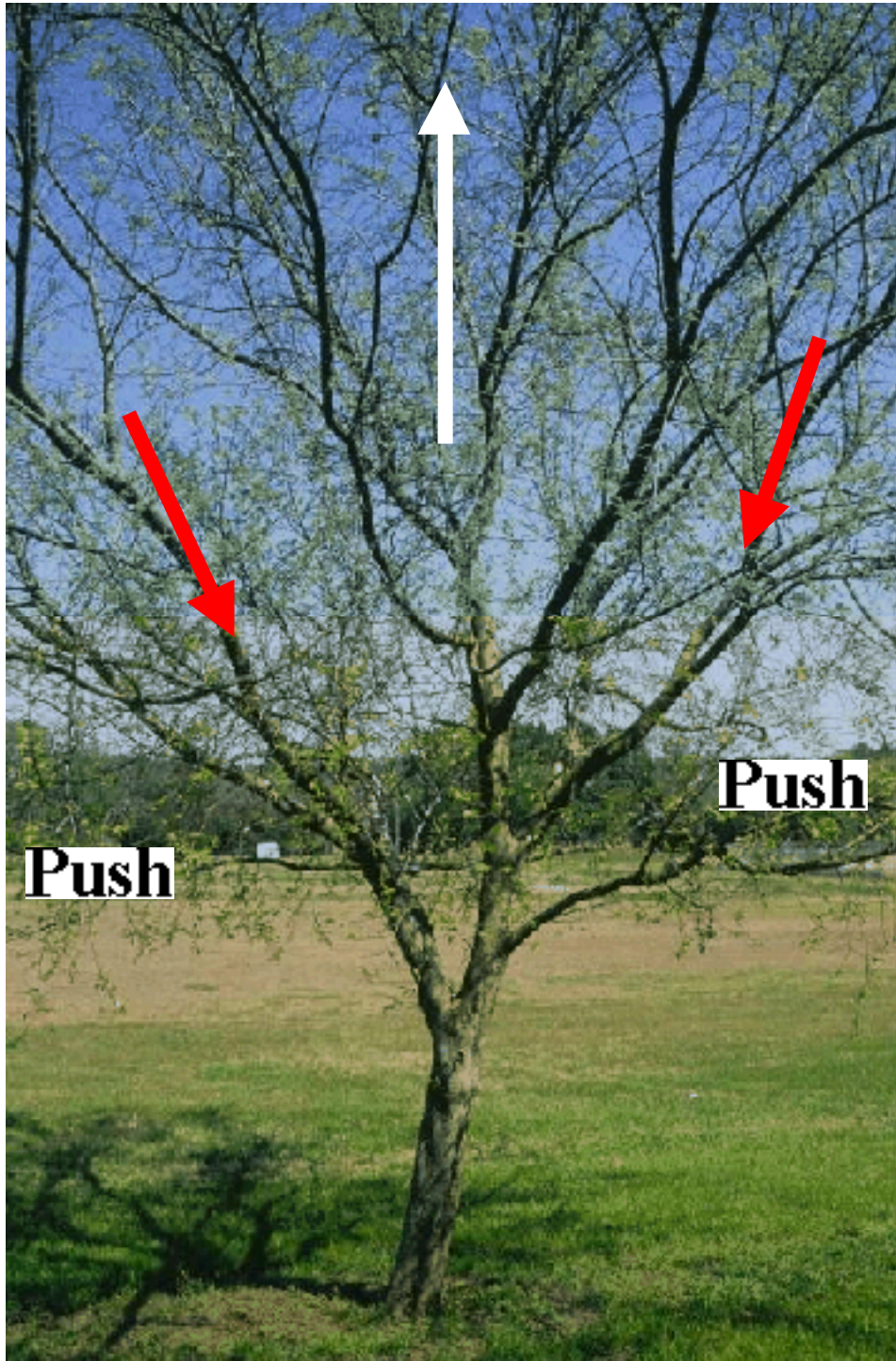
Pruning Plan: First 5 years

Most branches are temporary.

Do not remove more than 35% of live foliage at a pruning visit.

Reduce all branches greater than ½ trunk diameter.

Reduce and/or remove all branches or stems competing with the one selected to be the leader.

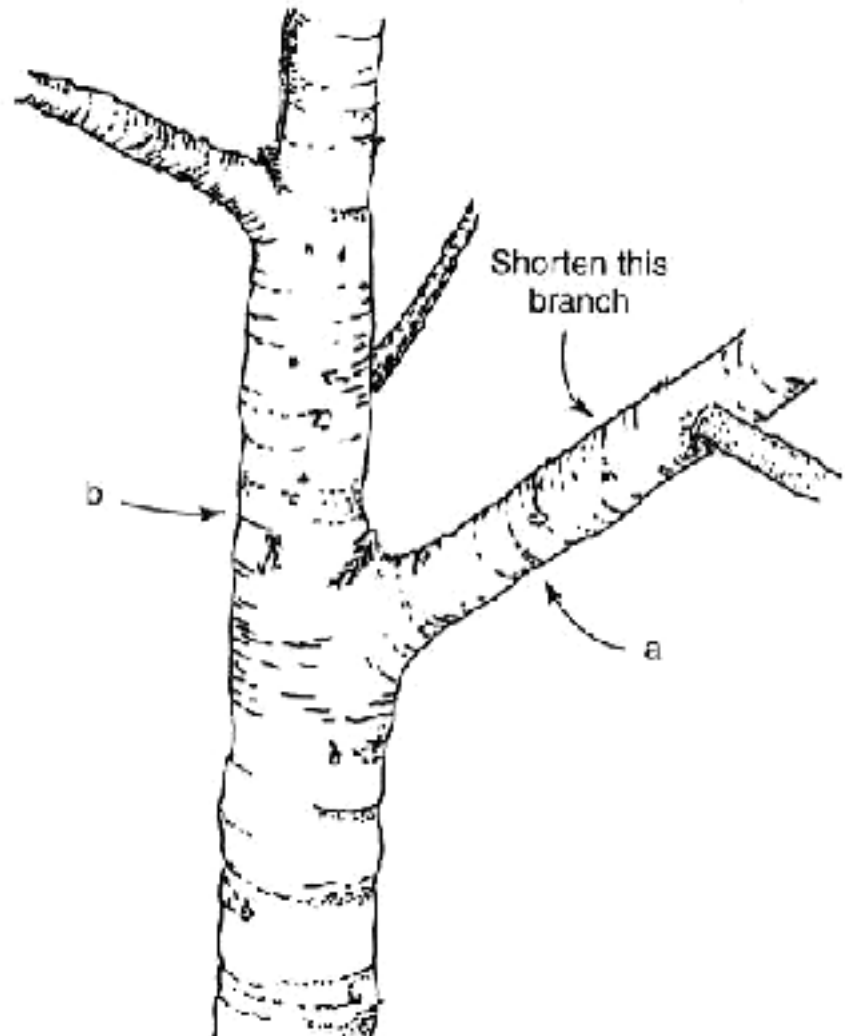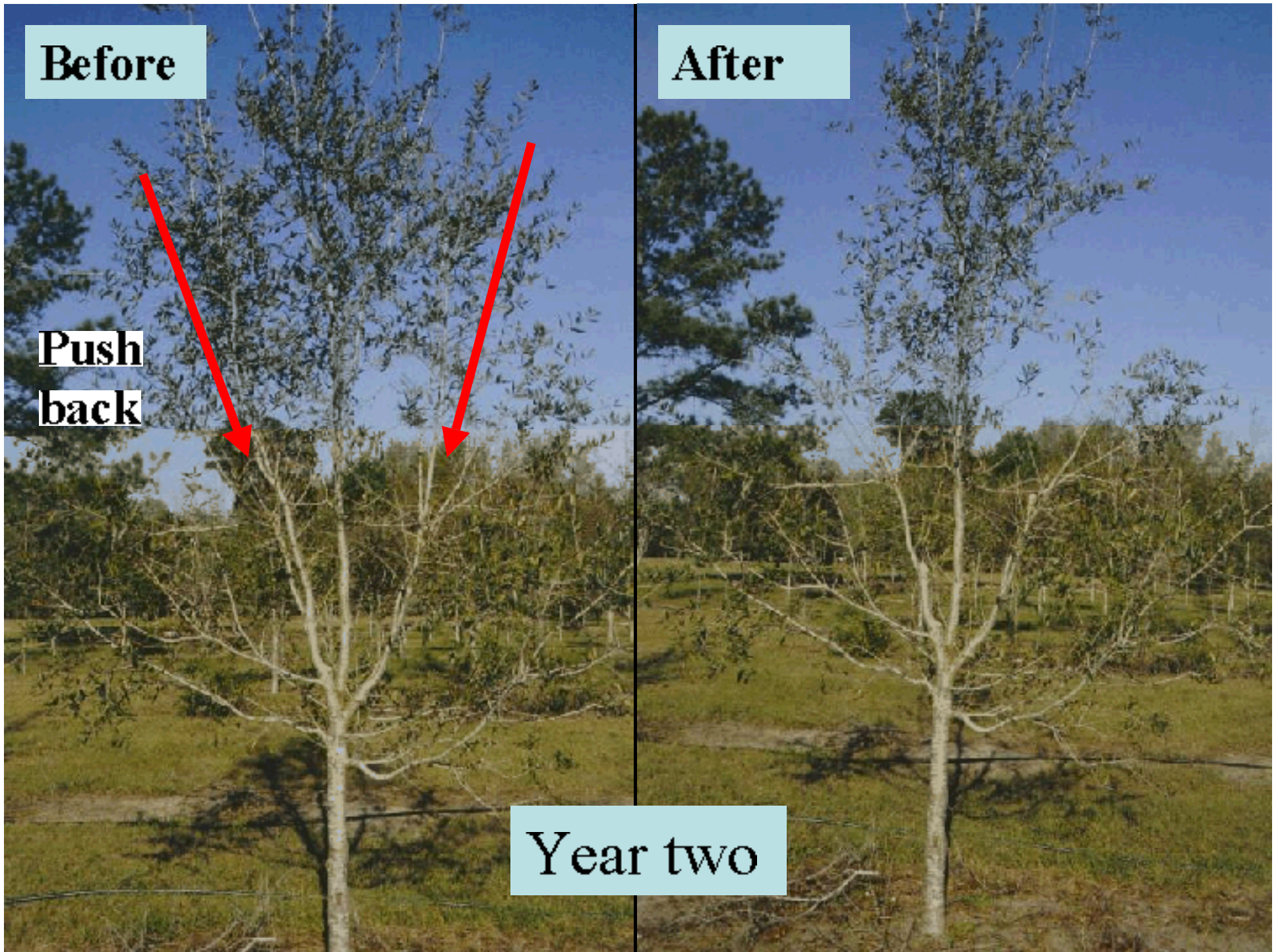*Reduce and/or remove* large, low vigorous branches.

Remove broken, cracked or severely damaged branches.

Push

Push

Reduce growth rate of low aggressive branches

Keep branches less than half the trunk diameter

Shorten this branch

b

a

Before

After

Push
back

Year two

Before

Structural pruning is a three step process:

1. Identify the stem that will make the best leader.

2. Identify which stems are competing with this leader.

3. Decide where to shorten these competing stems.

Before

After

With dedication to a management plan, your community can become a model for others