

Lion Tailing – A dangerous and hazardous way to improperly prune your trees

Lion tailing is a trimming practice that severely damages trees. All the inner foliage, branches and limbs of a tree are stripped bare. The lion-tailed trees have the unnatural form of a giant umbrella with the remaining foliage limited to the end of the branches. The limbs on the tree are left long and bare except for a characteristic “tuft” of foliage at the end giving the appearance of a lion’s tail. Unfortunately many so-called professional tree services practice lion tailing and we are seeing it all over St. Louis. Often consumers do not recognize this as a bad practice don’t understand how damaging it is to a tree. Lion tailing should not be confused with proper thinning – which is the selective removal of branches to decrease weight and wind resistance. Proper pruning will never remove more than 25 percent of the trees foliage. Remember, this type of mistake can’t be reversed. It will take years and years of corrective pruning to attempt to correct his damage and most of the time, the tree will die anyway.

Trees that are Lion-Tailed:

Have a long, weak limb with weight only on the top end and have greatly increased likelihood of breakage.
Are now exposed increased sunlight on the interior of the tree will cause sunscald
It stimulates vigorous new growth on the inner portion of the tree that is weakly attached and prone to breakage

It removes too much foliage disrupting the trees energy reserve for future growth

It destroys the tree’s appearance and value

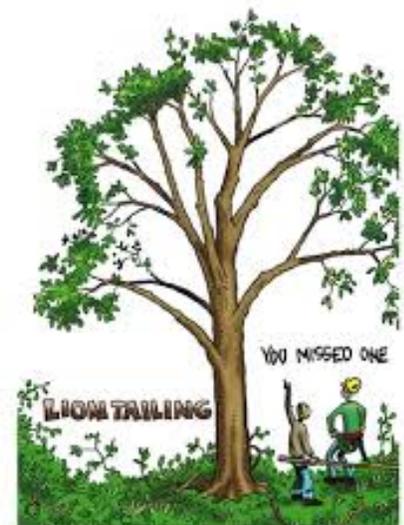
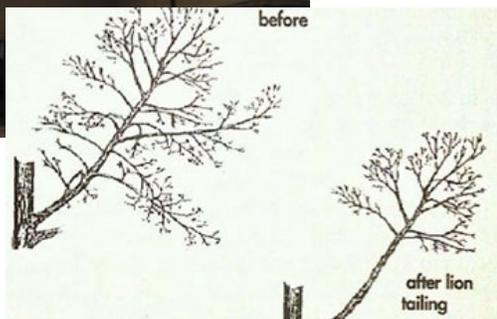
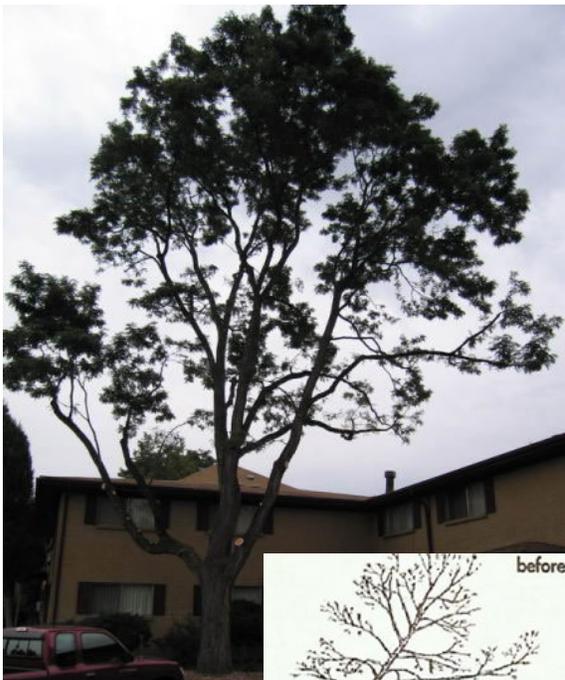
Irreparable damage has been caused to the tree’s health and its long term safety

The tree is now more susceptible to disease

Have increased risk of branch failure by weakening the tree root and eliminating the dampening effect that interior limbs provide when branches move during storms.

The removal of so many leaves also seriously limits the process of photosynthesis, making it even harder for a large tree to maintain itself.

Thinning the canopy or reducing the crown of a mature tree is sometimes required for aesthetic reasons or to prevent damage to property. But this is a task best left to a certified arborist with experience.



Lion tailing causes accelerated tip and sprout growth resulting in poor ice and wind resistance. Thinning tip growth is a better alternative for "sprucing up" a tree's canopy