

Trail Maintenance Guide



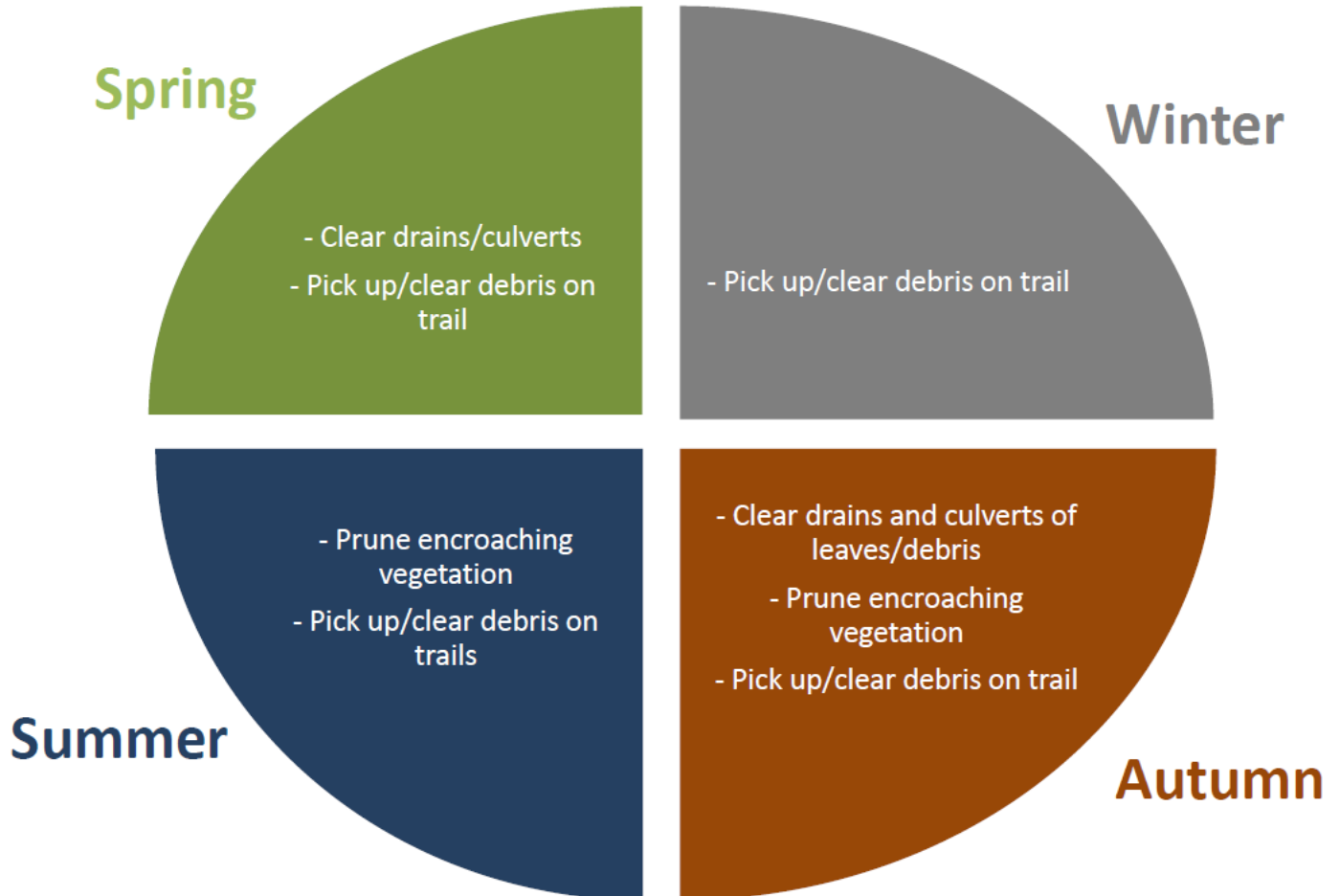
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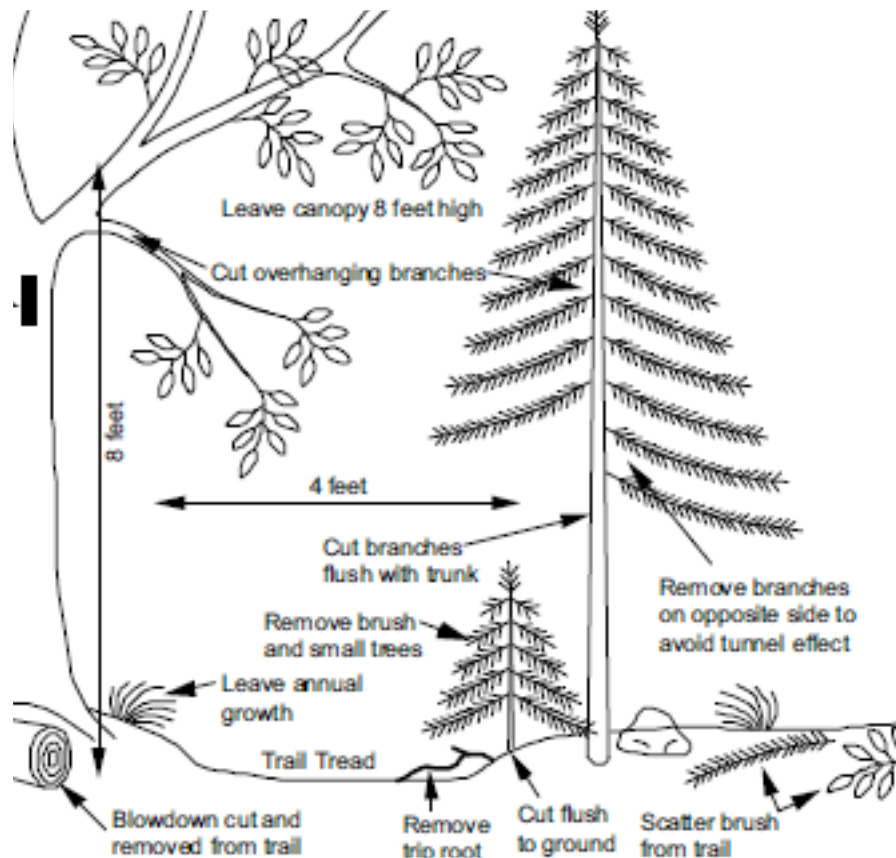
Thank you, Trail Maintainers, for all that you do! This guide is a collection of best practices in trail maintenance. Be sure to read the “Tips” section as well, for important techniques and safety information.

Remember, safety first! Do not attempt any trail maintenance project not outlined in this guide, and if ever you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, stop the project and report the issue to Merlin Ennis. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Merlin at (860) 868-9131 or by e-mail at merlin@steeprocksoc.org.

Trail Maintenance Schedule



Cutting Back Encroaching Vegetation



Goal:

- ❖ A hiker with pack/horseback rider can walk trail without touching trees, limbs, or brush.

SRA Standards:

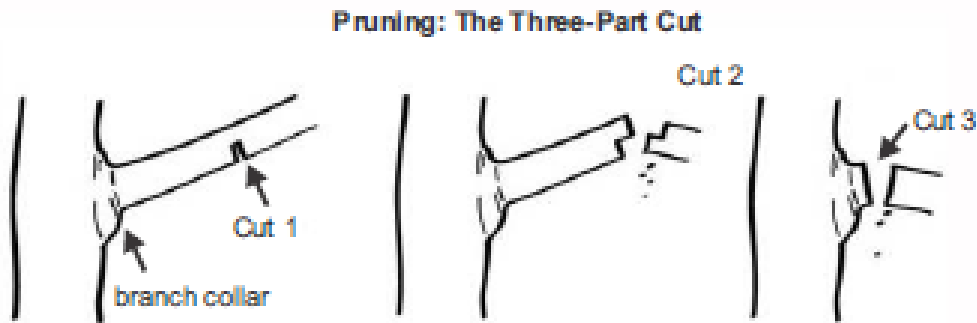
- ❖ Clear trail corridor to a minimum of 3 feet wide and 8 feet tall for hiking only trails (12 feet tall for horse trails).
- ❖ Cut branches flush with trunk or flush with ground. Remove tripping or poking hazards, such as roots or stems sticking out onto trail.
- ❖ NOTE: Volunteers are not allowed to use chainsaws within SRA's preserves.

Tips:

- ❖ Annual growth, such as ferns and grasses, can be left unless it is particularly thick or aggravating.
- ❖ If you are using your own weed whacker, always wear gloves and eye protection. Hold the machine firmly with two hands so that the cutting head parallels the ground and stop

cutting immediately if another hiker/worker is within 50 feet of you. For more detailed safety and use information, click [here](#).

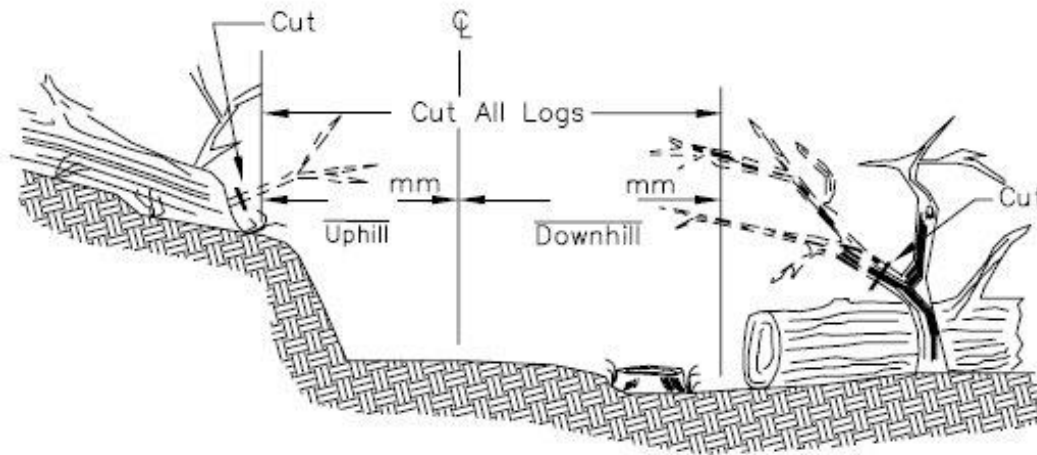
- ❖ Ensure that the area is safe and clear of nearby workers/hikers when cutting larger limbs and logs.
- ❖ Use the three-part cut on larger branches (see image below).



How to: The Three-Part Cut

- 1) Undercut 1 to 2 feet out from the trunk of the branch collar. This cut eliminates the chance of peeling or tearing bark as the branch is removed.
- 2) Create a top cut a few inches beyond the first cut, allowing the limb to drop smoothly.
- 3) The final cut removes the remaining stub. Cut flush with the trunk, along the branch collar. This allows the tree to efficiently heal itself.

Blowdowns and Windfalls



Goal:

- ❖ The trail is clear and unobstructed, free of fallen trees or limbs

SRA Standards:

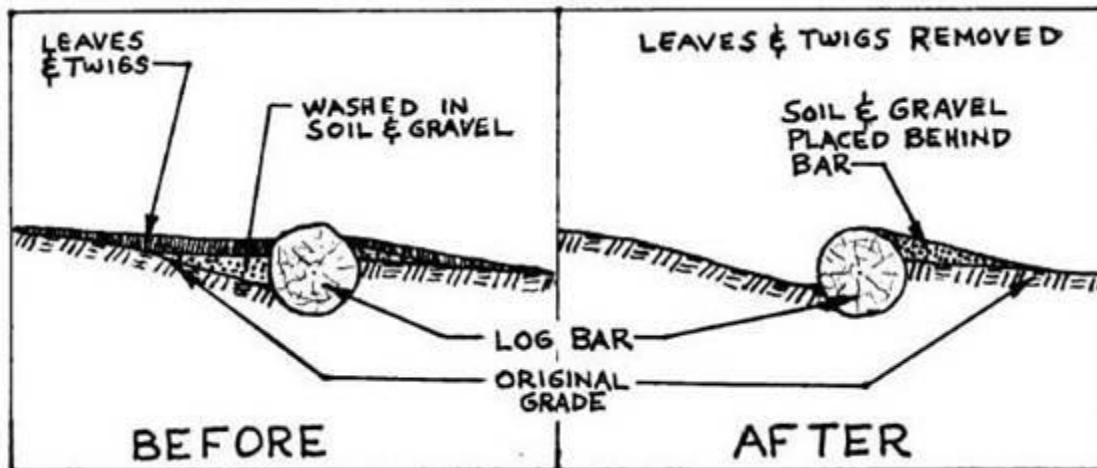
- ❖ Drag all cut limbs outside of the trail corridor, with cut ends facing away from the trail. Limbs are scattered, not piled, in order to create a more natural look.
- ❖ Cut logs as few times as possible, and drag or roll cut pieces off trail. Cut log so that the entirety of the trail corridor (minimum of 3 feet, but wider on equestrian and bicycle trails) is open.
- ❖ NOTE: Volunteers are not allowed to use chainsaws within SRA's preserves.

Tips:

- ❖ If log is larger than 3 inches in diameter, DO NOT attempt to cut by yourself. Take note and report the log to Staff via Email (Trails@steeprocksoc.org).
- ❖ When cutting a log, stand on the uphill side as the log may roll.
- ❖ Let standing trees stand (see below image).



Clearing Waterbars and Culverts



Goal:

- ❖ Trail erosion is minimal, with waterbars and culverts efficiently draining water from the trail.

SRA Standards:

- ❖ Remove leaves and twigs on the uphill side of the waterbar or culvert and scatter debris off trail.
- ❖ Washed in soil and gravel from uphill side of waterbar is pulled to the downhill side of the waterbar, reinforcing the water bar creating a berm that prevents water from rising over it.
- ❖ Water bar is shallow with the uphill trench and downhill berm feathered into the trail tread, creating a gentle slope change that does not pose a tripping hazard.

Tips:

- ❖ If the trail needs a new waterbar to prevent erosion, mark the location and make note in your Reporting Form.
- ❖ When removing sediment from a waterbar, be sure to maintain the original angle of the waterbar.
- ❖ Be the water! Follow the likely path of water and observe where it enters and exits the trail.
- ❖ Walk your trails in the rain to see exactly where and how water is flowing.
- ❖ When using tools for clearing the water bar, do not raise the tool above your head and do not carry the tool on your shoulder.