

# SHARPEN TO PRUNE

By ROBERT A. FANNO

The Fanno Saw Works

Chico, California

**A** DULL pruning saw is about as useful to a tree climber as a 100 pound backpack. There's a drag on both that can't be tolerated very long.

Pruning saws are at the heart of the business for the professional arborist. A recent survey of professionals in this field showed more than 25 percent of every job bid involved pruning and trimming. With this kind of interest, tree care men have a high stake in keeping prun-

ing saws in top shape.

Yet when it comes to keeping this important tool sharp, few arborists know the steps involved in successful saw sharpening. Basically, there are five critical steps to sharpening: joint, shape, set, bevel, file.

The pictures tell the story. Note that you can usually tell whether a saw needs sharpening by the bevel and the unevenness of the teeth.

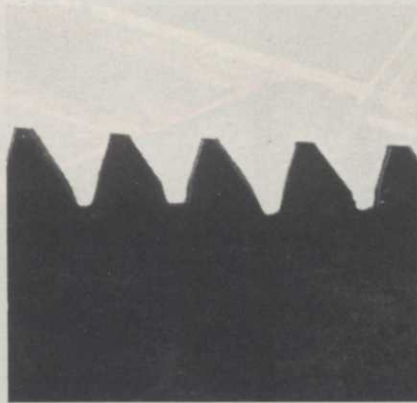
By jointing, the teeth are brought to a standard height. This step gives

the saw sharpener a new starting point to continue with the rest of the sharpening steps. It is best accomplished by using a large flat file. One or two strokes of the file across the tips of the teeth will usually be sufficient. The trick is not to file off any more of the teeth than necessary to bring all of them to a standard height.

Shaping comes next. Nine out of ten times this step can be avoided. It's only needed on saws that have



This is a typical saw that needs to be sharpened. Notice how the teeth are uneven in height and bevelled wrongly. It does not cut cleanly or smoothly.



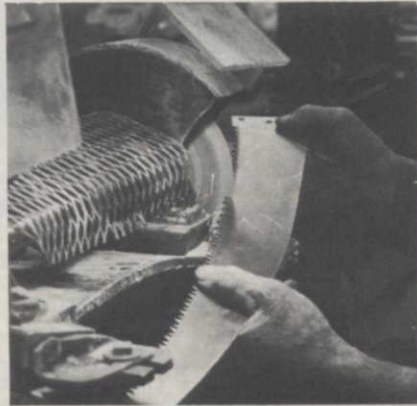
The blade above has now been jointed. Jointing is the process where the teeth of the saw are brought to the same height. This gives you a starting point.



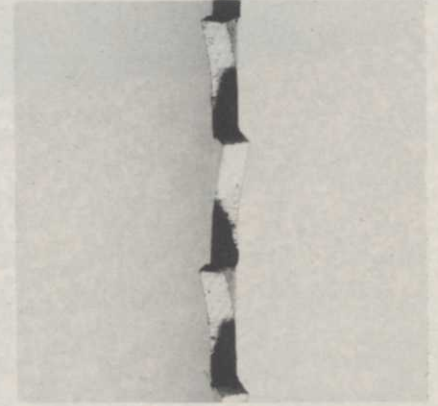
Use a large flat file to joint curved pruning saws. Usually one or two strokes across the tips of the teeth running the blade length will do it.



For straight saw blades, use a jointing tool. Note how saw blade is securely held in the vice so it won't wiggle or come loose.



This is called shaping. You can avoid this step most of the time. It's only needed if saw is badly sharpened or neglected.



What you see is the set of the saw. It refers to the alternating tooth pattern while looking down from above. It's important that saw set is correct.

been badly sharpened or neglected. Shaping brings the teeth back to their original size and shape. Generally, a grinding wheel applied lightly to the teeth will quickly accomplish the job.

Probably the most important step in sharpening a pruning saw is setting. The set of a saw refers to the alternating tooth pattern. You can see this by looking down on the tops of the teeth. The average of amount of set is .025 to .030 inches for each tooth. This means that each tooth should be set left or right of tooth center by just a fraction of an inch.

When cutting green or fibrous wood, you'll need more set. Some arborists refer to this as bite. Hardwoods and deadwoods need a lighter set in the saw. The set of the saw determines the amount of cutting edge exposed to the cutting surface. You can put set in a saw by hand or by machine. Stanley Tools makes a pistol-grip saw setting tool that is easy to use and accurate enough for the professional arborist. If you hand set your saws you set the teeth on one side and then turn the blade

over and set the other side. A good vice is a must.

If you are looking for shortcuts, consider a combination of the last two steps. In the process of filing, you also put a nice bevelled edge on the tooth. Our saws at Fanno Saw Works have the edge of the teeth bevelled about 15 degrees. Other saw manufacturers vary. We also have a four degree negative hook on our saw teeth. This refers to the direction of the teeth and also where the cutting edge is placed in relationship to a given centerpoint. We've found this to be of real advantage in terms of life of a given saw.

That's about all there is to sharpening pruning saws. Note the difference between the dull, disjointed blade in the beginning and the same blade when sharpened. Quite a difference! The sharp saw has uniformity between teeth and exhibits a keen edge that will cut quickly and true.

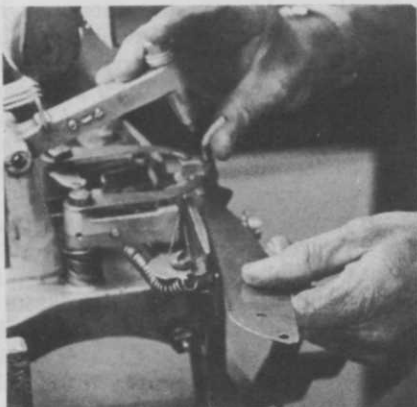
One special tip on saw sharpening. We've found that if you run a hon-



Here's the tools you need to sharpen your own saws: a six-inch Cant saw file, large flat file for jointing, pistol-grip saw set tool, and jointing tool for straight blades.

ing stone down the saw blade after you've filed it that the edge will be even sharper when you use it. The honing stone takes off the metal burrs.

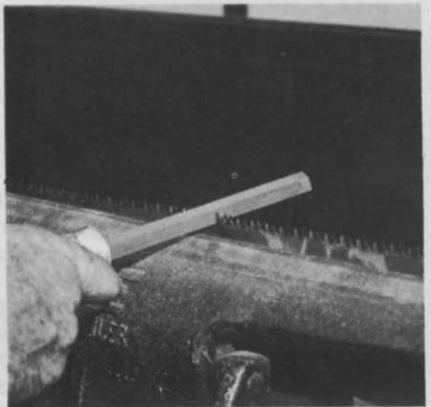
Saw sharpening is not difficult. If you're still in doubt about sharpening your saws, consult a professional. □



Not all saws have the same set. The average amount is .025 to .030 inches for each tooth. You need more for fibrous wood; less for deadwood.



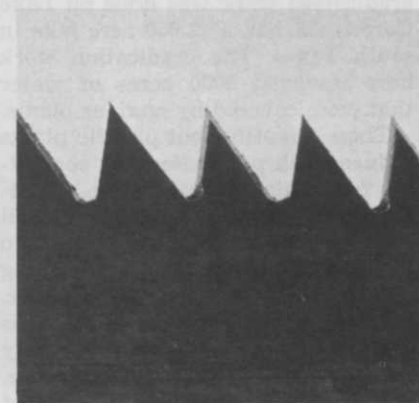
You can buy a pistol-grip saw setting tool for your saws. Stanley Tools makes an acceptable unit. Set the teeth on one side first and turn saw over.



When you file a saw, you also put a nice bevelled edge on the tooth. Fanno saws are bevelled about 15 degrees; other saws vary.



This man has been making and filing saws for 35 years. Note how he holds file. Saw vice holds saw firmly leaving blade exposed.



Here's a freshly sharpened saw. Compare it to the first two pictures. Note the joint, shape, bevel and file. Saw will cut fast in this condition.



A final saw tip. Lay saw on flat surface. Run a honing stone down the saw blade to take off metal burrs. It will put a professional touch to your work.