

CHOOSING TREES TO REMOVE AND TREES TO KEEP

Make every cut serve the future forest.

Good tree selection begins with the desired future condition. Instead of removing every imperfect tree or keeping only the largest, evaluate vigor, species, structure, competition, habitat, wildfire exposure, and consequences together.



Marking leave trees first keeps the desired forest—not the removal list—at the center of the prescription.

● FAVOR THE FUTURE STAND

KEEP VIGOR AND DIVERSITY

Retain trees that can carry the stand forward.

- ✓ Favor healthy crowns, stable form, appropriate species, and adequate growing space.
- ✓ Keep varied ages, sizes, groups, openings, seed sources, and valuable habitat features.
- ✓ Protect trees that support shade, screening, soil stability, or other stated goals.

● REMOVE WITH A REASON

ADDRESS CONSEQUENCE AND COMPETITION

Each cut should have a clear purpose.

- ✓ Prioritize trees that threaten people, structures, access, utilities, or important leave trees.
- ✓ Reduce ladder fuels, excessive density, poor form, severe decline, or active disease where appropriate.
- ✓ Avoid selecting trees from one defect alone when their ecological value remains high.

● MARK THE PRESCRIPTION

CHECK THE PATTERN

Stand back before the saw starts.

- ✓ Mark leave trees and removals consistently, then view the pattern from several directions.
- ✓ Check crown spacing, wind exposure, regeneration, wildlife features, and operational access.
- ✓ Confirm slash treatment and follow-up work before finalizing the cut.

✓ START HERE

- ✓ Write the goals and rank them before evaluating individual trees.
- ✓ Identify targets, high-value trees, habitat features, and sensitive sites.
- ✓ Mark leave trees first, then choose removals that support them.
- ✓ Review the pattern at stand scale with a qualified forester or contractor.

▲ THE RAVEN WORKS PERSPECTIVE

Tree selection is applied judgment. The best prescription protects what matters, gives the chosen trees room to thrive, keeps ecological complexity, and leaves a forest that remains workable as it grows and changes.

Choose the future first. Cut with purpose. Recheck the pattern.

Sources: Colorado State Forest Service forest-management and stewardship guidance.

◎ IN THE FIELD

Three questions sharpen every selection decision:

WHAT IS THE GOAL?

A tree can be desirable for habitat and undesirable beside a home; context determines the choice.

WHAT WILL REMAIN?

Judge the treatment by the spacing, diversity, and structure left after removals.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Wind, sunlight, slash, regeneration, and future growth begin changing the stand immediately.