



August 2007 Project of the Month

Client – Matt Baines

Location – Portland's John's Landing District

Situation

Trecology has been helping Matt Baines keep the multitude of trees in his small back yard oasis pruned for several years. His katsura, hornbeam, hinoki cypresses, rhodies and azaleas require lots of attention and careful pruning to keep their graceful shapes and relatively small size. In addition, trees in neighboring yards are competing with his trees. All in all, it's the botanical equivalent of a room full of bright and intelligent 4 year-olds, all needing and deserving attention developmentally and aesthetically.

Approach

The real prizes of Matt's urban forest are his two Japanese maples (one upright and one laceleaf) and his katsura tree. And let's not forget the hornbeam. Luckily, these are evenly distributed throughout the yard and do not compete with each other.

The upright Japanese maple is being forced into the center of the yard by the neighbor's honeylocust and the katsura is under constant attack from one neighbor's plum and another's clematis vines. We continue to prune these outside influences back and give Matt's trees room to grow and develop while slowing their growth to full size.

We have taken out some weakly attached co-dominant leaders in the katsura and are currently allowing the top to re-establish. The katsura will be one of the dominant trees in the yard and will eventually out grow the neighbor's plum and hopefully the clematis. The hornbeam near the house is being structurally thinned to reduce the plethora of co-dominant leaders and control its growth towards the house.



We are working to contain the size of the Japanese maple by pruning back to lateral branches. This stimulates some sprouty growth that needs to be dealt with in the next growing season. However, it is much better that tipping or heading back, which causes a profusion of sprouts and disrupts the flow of the branches that will be seen in the winter when the leaves are off. The rhododendrons and azaleas are a different story, and are thinned and tipped back to keep their growth compact under their taller neighbors.

All in all, not the same challenge of pruning a 100 year-old oak, but a challenge nonetheless ... like a room full of 4 year-olds.

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