



pruning

Reasons for Pruning

Pruning may be needed for many reasons. The main reason for pruning is to shape the tree or shrub to the desired form. Damage can occur to branches from wind, ice, disease and insect problems. These dead or damaged branches will need to be removed to prevent more damage from occurring. This type of pruning should be done as soon as the need arises, since waiting could allow disease to spread to healthy wood.

Trees that are planted for their flowers or fruit production may need careful pruning to enhance flower production. Removing weak and crossed or rubbing branches and thinning out excessive growth will result in larger and better fruit or flower production.

The following information is a brief discussion of pruning times and techniques for certain plants. More in-depth books on pruning can be purchased at our Garden Store.

Shrubs

Shrubs that are not grown for their flowers, or those that flower late in the season (generally after June 15), can be pruned any time of the year, although early spring before new growth begins is best. Shrubs that bloom earlier than June 15 will generally bloom on the previous season's growth. These should not be pruned in the fall, winter or spring before they bloom, because this would remove the flower buds. These shrubs should be pruned immediately after they finish flowering.

The following is a list of shrubs that bloom on the previous year's growth and should only be pruned **after** flowering:

Almond, Flowering

Azalea

Beautybush

Forsythia

Honeysuckle

Hydrangea (pink & blue flowering types and Oakleaf)

Lilac

Mockorange

Pieris

Quince

Rhododendron

Viburnum

Hypericum, Bluebeard Spirea and Butterfly Bush (Buddleia) may experience dieback in severe winters. Prune off dead twigs on these shrubs in the spring after new growth starts.

Potentilla and Spirea do best when pruned annually. To keep plants looking full and bushy, remove about 1/3 of the stems to the ground and then trim the entire plant back by 1/3 in late winter or early spring. A light trimming of a few inches after they flower will usually provide a new display of flowers in a few weeks.

Althea (Rose of Sharon) are one of the last shrubs to leaf out, often not showing growth until late May or early June. Be careful to wait until growth appears before pruning. Pruning too early may remove branches that are in fact alive.

Trees

Trees are best shaped while young, as the branches are smaller, and pruning at this time leaves smaller wounds that heal quicker, minimizing the chances for disease or insect damage of the wound. Once established, they need minimum care to maintain their beauty. It is important to develop a good branching habit in a young tree. Prune to develop one central leader and branches that have wide angles where they join the trunk. The closer the lateral branches are to 90°, the stronger the attachment at the branch. Narrow angled branches tend to break in storms. (See diagrams back page)

For most trees, pruning should be completed before growth begins in spring. Some species, (Maple, Walnut, Yellowwood & Birch), tend to bleed sap from their pruning wounds. This will not harm the tree, but is unsightly. To prevent bleeding of sap, prune these trees in late spring to early summer. Remember that wounds made after July do not heal well for the remainder of that season. Heavy pruning of Japanese Maples, unlike other types of Maples, should be done during the dormant season; just prior to bud break and leaf formation.

Oak trees should **only** be pruned from November to March. This is a protection against the spread of Oak Wilt. The insects that spread Oak Wilt are attracted to the sap of these trees, so pruning when dormant helps to stop the spread of this disease.

Fruit Trees and Small Fruit

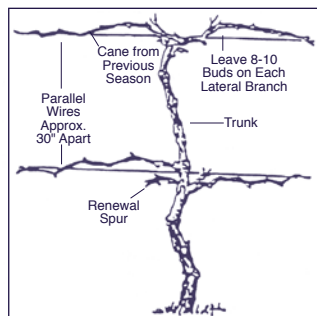
Trees that are grown for their fruit need to be pruned carefully or you will reduce or eliminate the size of your fruit crop. Apple, Pear and Cherry trees need only a light pruning while dormant to remove water sprouts (rapidly growing, vertical shoots), damaged branches and twigs. The fruit is produced on short, slow growing spurs of the branches.

Peaches and Nectarines, however, grow vigorously and need more pruning to prevent fruit from over-loading the branches and causing breakage. These trees produce their fruit on the previous summer's growth, so never remove all the new growth or you will not have any fruit the following season.

Apricots and Plums are fast growers like the Peaches, but they produce their fruit on spurs similar to Apples. New branches that are too long or straggly can be completely removed on these trees. However, leaving some new growth increases the number of spurs for fruit production.

Do not remove any main branches on 3-in-1 or 5-in-1 special fruit trees as you may be removing an entire variety from the tree.

Annual pruning is necessary for good fruit production on grapes. Grapes should be pruned when dormant, between December and late March. Grapes are usually trained in the "double T" method leaving 8-10 buds on each of the 4 stems. (see diagram)



The fruit of most raspberries form on side shoots along canes (stems) that grew the year before. Remove canes after they have born fruit, leaving the newer canes, as they will be the fruiting canes for next year. Blueberries need to be thinned by 1/3 to 1/2 each year in order to maintain larger fruits. Pruning should be done in early spring. To help ensure good fruit production, be sure to check out the organic products available at the Garden Store.

Evergreens

In general, most evergreens need very little pruning. It is important to choose the correct size evergreen for its location when planning a landscape, as it is nearly impossible to correct an overgrown evergreen by pruning.

Spruces and Firs can be trimmed while young to produce a fuller tree by trimming the new growth by 1/3 to 1/2. This should be done after the new growth has hardened off in July. More severe pruning can be done by cutting back into last year's growth, just be sure to make the cut above a side branch or bud.

Pines can be made fuller by trimming candles (new growth) back by 1/3 to 1/2, however, do not trim into last year's growth, as they do not possess the dormant buds that the Firs and Spruce do and will not replace the branches removed.

Arborvitae and Junipers can also be kept more compact by cutting back new growth. These plants tend to have a 'dead zone', or interior area where there is no foliage, so cutting back too far exposes the dead zone, and is very unsightly. Severe pruning should be done in early spring so the new growth will fill in the exposed areas.

Yews can be trimmed to maintain a formal shape if desired. Their new growth can be trimmed as needed in mid-June. Yews can also have a second **light** pruning in late September. Do not over prune late in the year.

How to Prune

Make sure all cuts are made using sharp tools that leave a clean cut (not ragged or torn). Cut as close as possible to the main trunk of the tree, or just above a bud on a good branch. Most small wounds do not need a wound dressing, as they tend to heal very well on their own. Larger wounds (over 2" in diameter) may be covered using a natural orange shellac. Asphalt based pruning tars should not be used. Other paints can do more harm to the tree than good because they contain drying agents that may damage the plant. When pruning large limbs use the 3 cut method to keep the branch from tearing away from the trunk. The first cut is 1/2 way through the branch on the lower side of the limb and will stop any tearing. The second cut will actually remove the branch and the third cut made at the branch collar will remove any remaining stub.

(See diagram)

