



## Pruning

Pruning trees and shrubs enhances their beauty and encourages their growth. Of all gardening techniques, pruning is the least understood, and therefore, the most frequently neglected.

There are three reasons to prune: to **train**, to **maintain** and to **repair**. When pruning one would want to address such issues as: rubbing / crossing branches, inadequate spacing between branches, water sprouts, suckers, girdling roots, narrow / weak crotches, dead and broken branches, and awkward / unattractive branches.

### There are three types of pruning cuts:

**Heading Cuts** (Tip Pruning): to encourage branching and thickening.



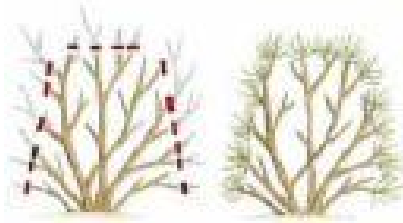
*(With the above shrub, use heading cuts to shorten growth and encourage branching.)*

**Thinning Cuts**: to enhance natural shape and to open up the plant.



*(With the above shrub, use thinning cuts to remove entire stems improving the appearance and health.)*

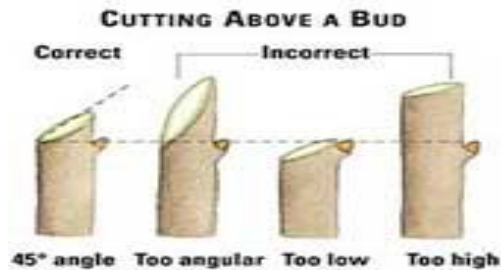
**Shearing** to form a hedge



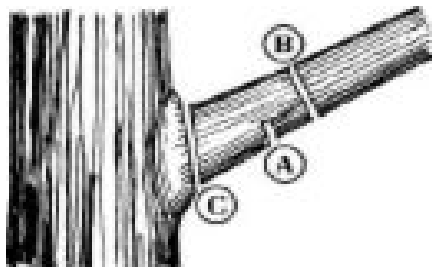
*(When shearing slightly taper the plant out towards the bottom so as to allow light to reach the bottom, maintaining uniformity through the whole plant, not just a beautiful top.)*

**Using correct cutting methods will maintain beauty as well as preventing damage and disease.**

**Correct Heading Cuts**- choose a bud pointing in the desired direction, then cut at a 45 degree angle (pointed upward towards the bud side) about an eighth of an inch above the bud tip. On plants with opposite buds cut straight across the stem an eighth of an inch above the bud tips. Then rub off the bud that's not going in the desired direction.



**Correct Thinning Cuts**- removing branches close to the trunk or another branch, needs to be done carefully so as not to harm the branch collar (tapered area where branch meets branch). Cut straight just outside the branch collar. Maintaining the collar intact will aid in healing and prevent disease. When removing large branches do so with a three cut process so as not to tear the remaining trunk or branch. First, undercut the branch halfway through about 6" away from desired removal point. Second, sever the branch completely just beyond the first cut. Third, make the final straight cut just outside the branch collar.



### What tools to use?

Size of the branch dictates more than anything which tool to use.

**Pruning Shears-** There are two types of pruning shears: bypass and anvil . Bypass shears cut like scissors with a blade passing a blade. This shear makes a cleaner cut and fits in tighter spaces than the anvil type. It can cut branches up to 5/8" diameter. Anvil shears cut like a knife on a cutting board with a blade cutting against a flat metal surface. This shear is more powerful than the bypass type. It can cut branches up to 3/4" diameter.



**Loppers-** These are essentially heavy duty long handled pruning shears that come in bypass or anvil type. They can cut branches up to 2". They extend your reach with several handle lengths available. Some gardeners with weak hands may find these to be easier than shears for smaller branches.



**Pruning Saws-** These are used for branches greater than 1" in diameter. Several sizes are available, some fitting in very tight places. Saws work well on branches up to 5" in diameter. Some blades only cut with the downward motion, whereas some cut with upward and downward motions.



**Hedge Shears-** Used to maintain formal hedges. Only used on soft new growth.



*(When pruning limbs larger, or higher than you or your tools can handle, hire a professional with the knowledge and right equipment for the job.)*

### **When to Prune?**

Non-flowering trees and shrubs can be pruned almost any time of year, except during subzero weather. *It is usually best to prune bleeders, like Maple and Birch during late summer or early fall.* Spring flowering species should be tip pruned after bloom. Summer or fall flowering species should be pruned in early spring. Fruit trees should be pruned in early March.

*(Training a tree by pruning when it's young will save lots of time, expense and worry.*

*Not to mention creating a beautiful tree.)*