

Pruning Methods

Pruning is really an easy thing to do. Pruning is necessary for the beauty and longevity of your plantings.

We recommend that you not shear your plantings. It will work for a while, but will eventually cause a “shell” of thick green foliage on the outside of the plant. This cuts off the light to the inside of the plant, which will then become woody and just sticks instead of foliage.

We recommend instead a **Two-Step Process** that includes “**Heading Back**” and “**Thinning Out.**” This helps to keep the plant perennially young and naturally compact.

Tools

Throw Out

- ✓ Hedge Shears

Recommend

- ✓ Hand Pruners
- ✓ Loping Pruners
- ✓ Folding Hand Saw

These will allow you to prune everything you have

When

The best time to prune most plants is directly after they bloom. However, pruning can be done anytime throughout the year. For flowering plants, it is recommended that you wait until they are done flowering.

New plantings won't require much pruning for 1-2 years after installation.

However, some shaping will be required as they develop. These guidelines are designed to be implemented for plants that have been growing in your yard for a few years.

Shrubs and Evergreens

Thin Out first by following the longer branches back inside the plant and cutting just above a bud or branch. Then lightly **Head Back** the rest, evening out the shape of the plant as you go. Try to keep a loose naturalistic look.

Large flowering shrubs like Viburnum, Forsythias, and others require a more severe method. **Thin Out** by removing the oldest largest stems or canes at the base. This encourages new canes to sprout, as a rule of thumb, there should never be any canes older than 2-3 years of age on the plant. Then **Head Back** what is left, cutting just above a bud or branch at different heights for a natural loose look. Never leave a stub above a bud or branch that is over 3/8” long. Doing so can start an infection problem within the plant.

Pines and Spruce

Many Pines are very specific about when they should be pruned. You have about a two-week period in the late spring when they can still set growth buds after being pruned. This time is often referred to as the “Candle Stage.” It occurs when the new growth resembles a candle before it opens its needles completely. Simply pinch off about half of the new growth where needed to keep the shape intact. If pruning is done at this time, you can even cut back the leader, and it can still pop out new buds, which will take its place. As a result, you can keep the plant compact and full without a lanky leader.

Shade and Flowering Trees

This type of pruning is done less often, but it is still very important.

The First thing to do on shade trees is to remove lower hanging limbs that interfere with mowing and other activities that may take place under it's limbs. First find the “Collar” where the branch and trunk join together. Always cut just outside the collar at the angle of the collar. Make a bottom cut first so that the falling limbs won't pull a strip of bark down the trunk. Then finish the cut from above.

Next remove limbs that cross through the tree and smaller secondary limbs that hang down from main limbs. Cut back limbs that detract from the shape of the tree. Keep limbs moving out and up, not down and back in. Again always cut just above a bud or branch, never leaving the stub to invite infection.

Treat flowering trees the same way. Remember to ***Thin Out*** as well as ***Head Back***. Usually wait until blooming is done.

Some Flowering trees such as Shadblow and Red Jade Crabapple are difficult to prune well, it is easy to lose their graceful form. Luckily they are small plants and usually don't need much pruning. If yours does, call us for help.