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Pruning Methods

Pruning is really an easy thing to do. It is also necessary for the beauty and longevity of your plantings. We strongly encourage you to avoid shearing your plantings. This type of pruning works for a short time, but eventually causes a “shell” of thick green foliage to grow only the outside of the plant. The shell blocks out light to the inner branches and eventually leaves them bare, without any 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 Pruner's

Lopping Pruner's

Folding Hand Saw

When

The best time to prune most plants is directly after they bloom. However, pruning can be done anytime throughout the year.

New plantings will require little to no pruning for the first couple of years. However, some shaping will be required as they develop. These guidelines are designed for plants that have been growing in your landscape 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, natural look.

Large flowering shrubs such as Viburnum, Forsythias, and others require a more severe method.

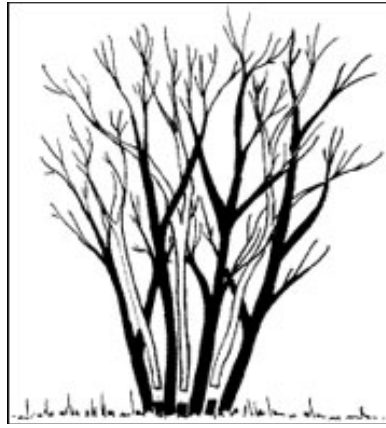
Thin Out by removing the oldest, largest stems or canes at the base. This encourages new canes to sprout. As a rule of thumb, there should never be any canes older than 2-3 years of age on the plant. Then, **Head Back** what is left, cutting just above a bud or branch at different heights for a natural, loose look. Never leave a stub above a bud or branch that is over 3/8” long. Doing so can increase the chances of infection.

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.



“Heading back”



“Thinning out”



“Candle pinching”

Shade and Flowering Trees

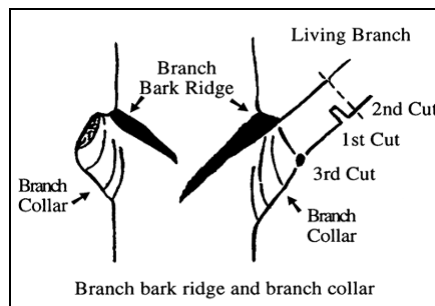
This type of pruning is done less often, but it is still very important.

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 leaving no stub. This will prevent infection.

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

Some flowering trees such as Shadblow and Red Jade Crabapple are difficult to prune well without losing their graceful form. Luckily, they are small specimens and usually don’t require much pruning. If you need help, please call us at 784-5525.



“Collar cut”