

## Pruning Woody Plants

Good pruning is necessary to preserve the general attractiveness of your landscape and to keep your ornamental plants healthy.

### Reasons for Pruning

1. To keep plants at desired size.
2. To remove all dead, diseased, broken and injured parts.
3. To develop certain forms or shapes--formal, informal, espalier, etc.
4. To encourage best growth for flowers and fruits.
5. To rejuvenate declining plants.

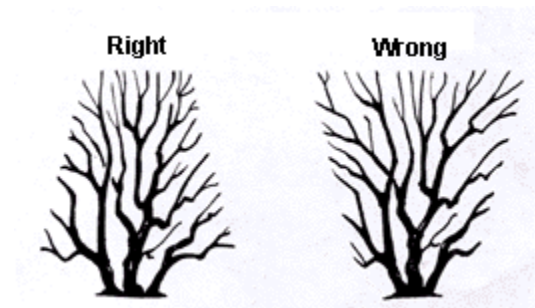
There are many other reasons for pruning. Your reason for pruning will determine how best to proceed.

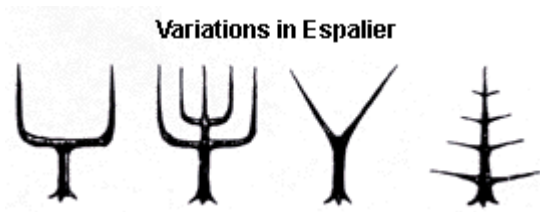
### Methods of Pruning

There are several different ways of pruning ornamental plants. Shearing or clipping the ends of plants results in a symmetrical shape usually much different from the natural shape of the plant. Such geometric outlines are undesirable on most properties. Shearing or clipping, especially with evergreens but also with some deciduous shrubs, results in a bushy exterior with a brown or defoliated interior due to shading. Hedge-type plants lend themselves to this type of pruning, however.

The base of hedges should be wider than the top, so that lower branches get enough light.

In the past few years, interest has grown in Espalier-trained and pruned trees and shrubs. Espaliers are trellis-trained trees or shrubs usually grown next to a wall. There are many variations in Espalier such as single and multiple Y-forms, fans, etc.





Espaliers are special types of trained and pruned trees and shrubs often used with modern homes and public buildings.

Most ornamental plants are pruned to preserve their natural shape as much as possible. This is accomplished, in some cases, by removing old branches of shrubs at ground level; by cutting back some of the branches: by removing dead, diseased, weak, broken and other wood; and by thinning out areas of the plant that become over-crowded. These methods are more difficult and time consuming than shearing, but the results improve flowering, natural beauty, and general health.

## When to Prune



Don't prune early in fall. This tends to produce late, immature growth. However, any plant can be pruned at any season of the year for the removal of dead, diseased, broken, or injured parts. Prune all plants when transplanting.

### Deciduous Shrubs:

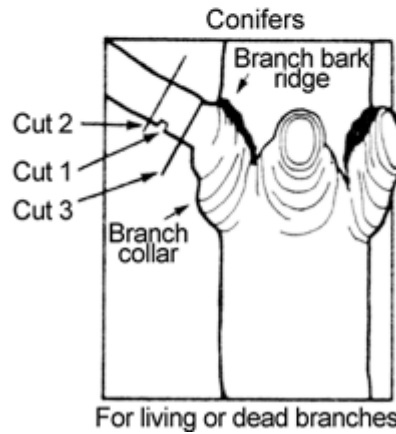
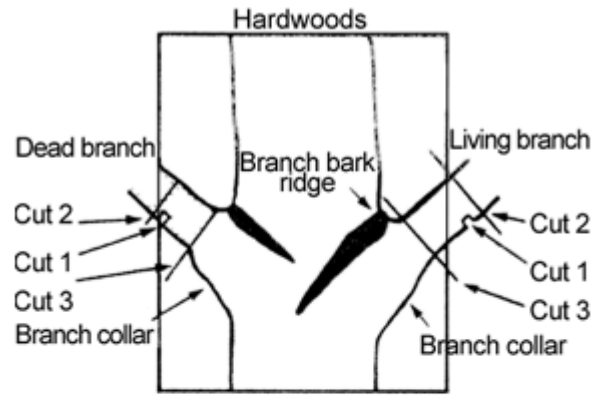
Deciduous shrubs are woody plants that lose their leaves each fall. Early-flowering types (those that bloom in March, April, May and early June) should be pruned immediately after flowering. Late-flowering deciduous shrubs (those that bloom in late June, July and August) should be pruned in late winter or early spring (late February, March and April).

### Evergreen Plants:

Most evergreens may be pruned in winter and early spring. Needle-type evergreens are often pruned twice: heavy cuts in early spring and a light tipping back of one-third to one-half the immature, soft, new growth in June. Do not prune evergreens in summer and early fall.



Pruning cuts must have a smooth surface to heal properly. Cuts should be clean with as little stub as possible.



## General Pruning Principles

How much pruning is needed? If the ornamental plant has been carefully selected for its location, a light annual pruning will usually be sufficient.

- Always cut back to another branch or bud.
- Cut back into healthy wood.
- Cuts should slant parallel to buds producing new growth.

## Use Good Tools and Wound Dressing

Tools required for general pruning include a pruning knife. Keep all tools sharp.

Pruning wounds of less than 2" in diameter are not usually treated with wound dressing. All larger wounds should be treated with an asphalt-base wound dressing. This is now available in a spray bomb for clean handling. Do not use house paint or other materials containing turpentine or coal tar as they injure the growing tissues. Shellac is satisfactory as a tree wound paint.

## Careful Choice of Plants Reduces Pruning Problems

Choosing the right plant for each location will eliminate many pruning problems. Avoid using trees like Spruce or American Arborvitae for foundation plants (those planted at the base of the house). Use low-growing-type plants under windows.

For more information on pruning see:

- [Pruning Evergreens](#)
- [Pruning Deciduous Shrubs](#)
- [Pruning Ornamental Plants](#)

