

# Pruning Basic Techniques

Pruning time is here again, and people are asking the inevitable questions: what, when, why and how should I prune? Let's review the basics:

## BASIC OBJECTIVES

Keeping in mind the basic objectives of pruning will make the job easier:

1. Maintain Plant Health - Always begin by removing dead, diseased, or injured wood.
2. Shape - You can create your desired result.
3. Control Plant Growth - Start by removing all crossing branches and wayward limbs.
4. Increase Flower & Fruit Production and Quality.

## TOOLS NEEDED

It is important to use the proper tools when pruning:

- Hand shears are used for branches up to ¼" inch in diameter.
- Loppers are a long-handled tool used for branches up to the size of a quarter.
- Pruning saws are used for limbs larger than a quarter.
- Pruning Paint/Tree Seal should be used to prevent insects and disease from entering the newly cut area on roses, figs & walnuts. Apply to cuts over ½" in diameter.
- Gloves & Ladder

## TIMING

Generally, trees are pruned when they are in their most dormant state:

- December and January begin the pruning season for most deciduous (leafless in the winter) fruit and shade trees.
- The exceptions to this rule of thumb are ornamental trees and shrubs grown especially for their spring flowers. Flowering plum, peach and cherry trees, magnolia, as well as forsythia, lilac and a few others are pruned just after blooming in the spring to avoid removing flower buds.
- Evergreen plants may be pruned year-round, but best results are achieved in late winter or late summer just before the seasonal flush of new growth.
- Evergreen plants susceptible to frost damage such as citrus, oleander or bottlebrush should be pruned after danger or frost in early spring.
- To control fruit tree size, the new growth can be pruned back by 50% in June and again in August (or after harvest).

## BASIC APPROACH

- Step back and assess the entire tree several times during your pruning.
- Remove dead, damaged and diseased wood. This can happen any time during the year.
- Make cuts at a 45° angle, 1/4-1/2" above a bud, slanting away from the bud.
- Remove interior crossing branches.
- Remove duplicate growth.
- Remove downward angling limbs.
- Prune to shape. Head back long, vertical shoots. Remove deranged, wayward or spindly limbs.



# Pruning Basic Techniques (cont'd)

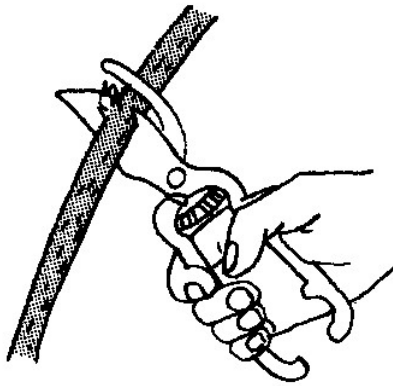
## PRUNING CONCEPTS

- Thinning - A technique whereby whole branches are removed from heavily wooded areas of trees and shrubs. It's important to make a smooth cut to the parent plant limb. Stubs will only die back, inviting disease and insect problems.
- Heading Back - A method of shortening existing branches to a more desirable length. Growth is redirected by pruning to a bud that will grow in the direction you wish. Pruning to an outside bud will keep the center of the plant open and free from crossing branches.
- Directional Pruning - Pruning back to a bud that will grow in the desired direction. Generally, prune to an outside bud. Keep the center of the plant open.

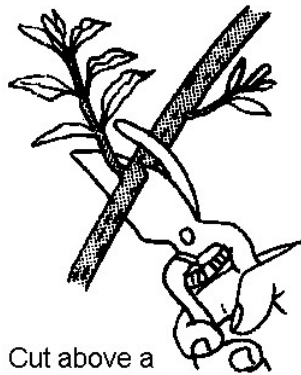
## CARE FOR PRUNING EQUIPMENT

- Always store tools out of the weather
- Clean blades with a brush to remove grass, twig ends and soil.
- Wipe the tool clean and dry.
- Occasionally wipe with a dampened cloth with household oil.

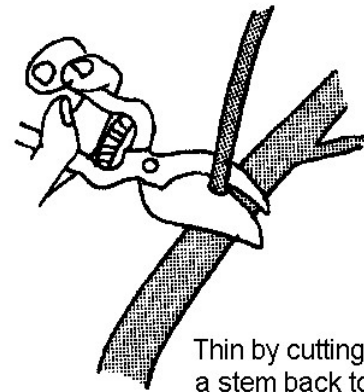
Here is where to cut



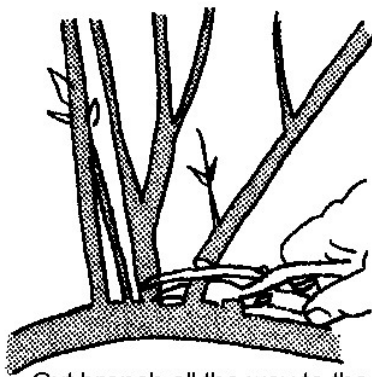
Cut just above a bud



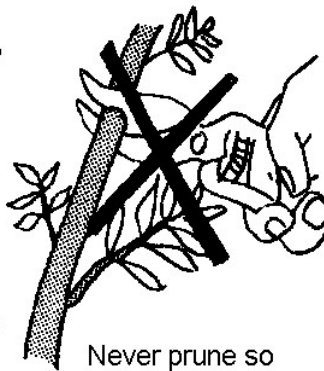
Cut above a healthy side branch



Thin by cutting a stem back to a main branch



Cut branch all the way to the base or the ground



Never prune so that long stubs remain



Seal cuts to prevent disease and keep out rot



**Alden Lane Nursery**

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