



KNOW HOW AND WHEN TO PRUNE THE DIFFERENT SPECIES OF TREE

Pruning may be done for many reasons. As a general rule, dead or broken branches may be pruned at any time. Pruning for other reasons – shaping, limbing up, or maintaining a set size – should be performed in late fall, winter, or early spring, to minimize the stress on the plant.

The timing is more critical with many flowering trees and shrubs, in order to avoid pruning away a season's worth of blossoms (see list at end of the column). Pruning to shape is best done over a period of several years and after a plant is established, usually a year or two after initial planting. Limbing up is also best performed over a period of years.

At least two-thirds of the tree or shrub should remain in branched foliage: Never remove branches higher than one-third the total height of the tree. Size maintenance, as in hedge pruning, should be done within the seasonal guidelines listed. Do not prune any live plant material during the heat of summer (early June to early September), while new leaves are expanding, or while the plant is in flower.

Pruning technique also is important. First, locate the branch collar on the branch you intend to remove. The branch collar forms a slight swelling at the base of every branch. Using appropriate, clean, well-sharpened tools, prune such that the branch is removed but the branch collar remains.

Do not leave stubs, and do not cut the branch flush with the trunk. Leaving the branch collar, and no more, encourages rapid healing, minimizing exposure to pests and disease. If the branch is too large to remove with hand pruners, undercut the lower side of the branch before cutting it through, to avoid bark tearing.

Early spring pruning (before flowering): fir, spruce, pine, Douglas-fir, hemlock, alder, ginkgo, Kentucky coffeetree, Rose-of-Sharon, hophornbeam, parrotia, oak, pagodatree, and mountain-ash trees; falsecypress, arborvitae, butterflybush, beautyberry, clematis, summersweet, cotoneaster, hydrangea, hypericum, potentilla, spirea and snowberry shrubs. Late spring pruning (after flowering): larch, holly, yellowwood, dogwood, smoketree, hawthorn, magnolia, crabapple, cherry, flowering pear and snowbell trees; and holly, mountain-laurel, pieris, rhododendron, azalea, Carolina sweetshrub, flowering quince, daphne, deutzia, forsythia, fothergilla, sweetspire, kerria, beautybush, honeysuckle, mockorange, pyracantha, rose, lilac, viburnum and weigela shrubs. Late fall /winter pruning (dormant): maple, buckeye, horsechestnut, serviceberry, birch, hornbeam, hickory, chestnut, catalpa, hackberry, katsuratree, redbud, fringetree, filbert, autumn-olive, beech, ash, honeylocust, silverbell, witch-hazel, goldenraintree, sweetgum, yellow-poplar, maackia, blackgum, sourwood, empress-tree, Amur corktree, sycamore, sumac, sassafras, stewartia, baldcypress, redwood, elm and zelkova trees; and yew (taxus), juniper, bayberry, and buckthorn shrubs.