

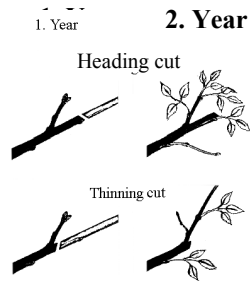
## Pruning Trees, Shrubs and Evergreens

Trees, shrubs and evergreens are usually pruned to improve their shape, control their size and to remove broken, dead and diseased wood. There are two pruning techniques used to remove branches:

### Pruning Techniques

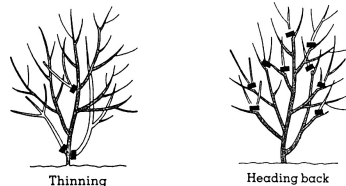
**Heading back** – means shortening a branch or shoot and removing the terminal bud (tip) of a branch by cutting it back to a healthy bud or lateral. Terminal dominance is lost, stimulating vigorous new shoot development from buds directly below the cut thus making the plant denser; buds lower on the branch remain unaffected.

**Thinning** – a pruning cut that removes entire shoots or branches to its point of origin. Thinning cuts result in a more open plant without stimulating excessive new growth.



### Pruning Deciduous Shrubs

Pruned shrubs will have larger flowers and look more healthy and vigorous than unpruned ones. Pruning shrubs give them a natural shape. That means use a mixture of heading back and thinning cuts. Thin out one fifth to one third of the oldest, tallest and darkest branches as well as any dead, damaged or diseased ones or those that cross or rub against each other. Head back some branches in the middle and upper part of the shrub. This will encourage new growth and renew the plant. Prune according to necessity and season of bloom:



### Time of pruning

The time of pruning differs, depending on the flowering time.

**Spring flowering shrubs** (flowering before the end of June) - Shrubs, which flower in spring, should be pruned immediately after flowering. New growth starts after blooming and will bear next years flower buds. If you wait until winter or next spring it will be these stems that are preparing to blossom that you'll be cutting away... Hence no flowers! Spring flowering shrubs are:

Barberry, Bittersweet, Blueberry, Chokeberry, Cotoneaster, Currant, Dogwood, Elder, Euonymus, Flowering Cherry and Plum, Forsythia, Honeysuckle, Lilac, Magnolia, Mockorange, Ninebark, Pearlbrush, Rhododendron and Azalea, Serviceberry, Smokebush, Spirea (spring-blooming species), Viburnum, Weigela, Winterberry, Wisteria

**Summer flowering shrubs** (flowering after the end of June) - Shrubs, which flower in summer, can be trimmed after blooming and no later than early spring before new growth starts. Flower buds develop on this years spring growth.

Summer flowering shrubs are:

Annabelle Hydrangea, Butterflybush, Coralberry, Panicle Hydrangea, Potentilla, Snowberry, Spirea (summer flowering types), St. Johnswort, Sumac, Summersweet.

### Shrubs which don't need to be pruned regularly

Some shrubs require annual pruning (e.g. Forsythia), other less frequently. Shrubs, which are slow to recover from pruning, should not be cut back regularly. Remove mostly diseased, broken or dense branches. Thinning out is better than heading back. Plants belonging to this group are:

Burning Bush, Dogwood, Magnolia, Serviceberry, Smokebush, Sumac, Viburnum

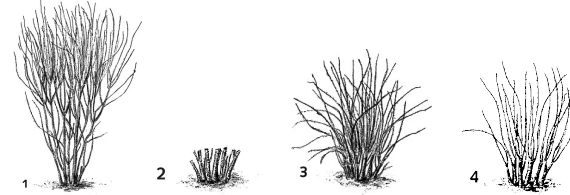
### Rejuvenation

Rejuvenation of old overgrown shrubs can either be done gradually over a period of 3 years or drastically pruned all at once. It is best done in spring before new growth starts

**Gradual rejuvenation over a 3 year period** - Remove 1/3 of the oldest stems each year at ground level. Numerous new shoots will arise from the ground, if excessive cut some back at ground level the next year. Any

overlong shoots may need cutting back to an outward facing bud. It is best to renew Lilacs gradually, because it can take them more than 3 years to produce flowers on new wood.

**Drastic rejuvenation** - In the spring cut back all stems to ground level (6"). Next year in spring remove some of the new canes and head back at different lengths some of the remaining ones to an outward pointing bud. In the third year follow normal annual pruning. Shrubs that will respond well to this are: Forsythia, Privet, Spirea, Honeysuckle, St. Johnswort, Dogwood, Annabelle Hydrangea



### Hedges

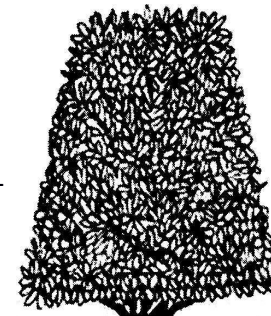
A formal hedge is sheared with pruning shears or electrical cutters to a definite size and shaped at least once and usually two or more times, each growing season. Shrubs in an informal hedge grow normally, but cut a portion of the oldest branches and stems annually to maintain a uniform rate of growth and to limit height and spread.

### Pruning a Formal Deciduous Hedge

**First Year Planting** - Cut the shrubs back to about one third to one half of their length to promote dense growth.

**Second Year** - Before new growth begins in spring shape the sides and top, keeping the base of the hedge wider than the top. This prevents the top from shading the bottom. Shear again after the first flush of growth; cut off about half of the pliable new stems.

**Third Year** - In the third year continue to establish the pattern and shape of a formal hedge. Cut before the leaves emerge in spring or just after the first flush of growth. The top can be flat, slightly rounded, or pointed. Some hedges require only one shearing each year; others may need several starting early in June, and then again in mid-



July and early September.

After the hedge reaches the desired height, shear just above the start of the previous year's growth.

### Pruning an Informal Deciduous Hedge

The only pruning required during the next years is to thin and remove dead, broken and diseased limbs. This keeps an informal hedge youthful and vigorous for years. Remember the flowering time when pruning.

### Rejuvenating an Overgrown and Neglected Hedge

An informal hedge may be rejuvenated by gradual renewal or by cutting it all the way to the ground.

## Pruning Trees

### Young Trees

**At planting time** very little pruning should be done. Damaged, crossing, inside growing branches or a competing leader should be thinned out. Branches taller than the leader should be headed back and long side branches can also be headed back to 1/3 of their length. Any overlying branches making a narrow branch crotch can be thinned. Tall whippy stems with very few or no side branches can be headed back to stimulate side branching.

**In the spring of the second year** after planting, the tree should be pruned to shape. Strive to keep the vertical distance between scaffolds 10 to 24 inches apart in young trees. Large trees naturally may assume several feet between scaffolds. Select branches that radiate in alternating positions to avoid shading those positioned below. Any low growing branches should be removed. If the leader has grown too tall it can be headed back.

**Over the next year** continue to remove low growing branches. Branches stay at the same place and do not increase in height as the tree grows. From now on little pruning is necessary. Remove only dead, diseased or damaged wood as well as crossing branches. Branches making a narrow crotch angle must also be removed.

### Mature Trees

For branches too large to hold in the hand, use the double cut method. There are basically three types of corrective pruning for mature trees.

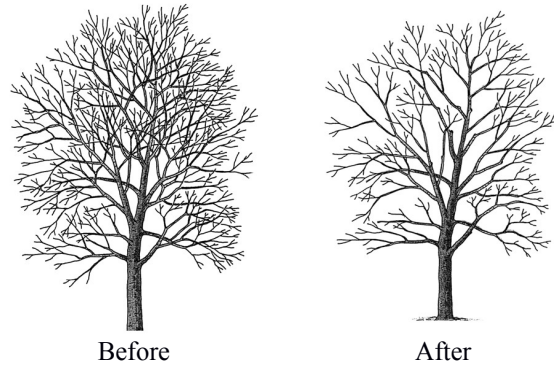
# Pruning

## Trees, Shrubs & Evergreens

**Crown Lifting** - lifting the crown or canopy of a tree involves removing lower branches that create an obstruction or hazard. This results in a tree with high scaffold branches. The ratio of a live crown to total tree should be at least two-thirds.

**Crown Thinning**- when a tree has become too dense selectively remove some branches to increase light penetration and air movement. No more than one quarter of the living crown should be removed at a time.

Crown Thinning

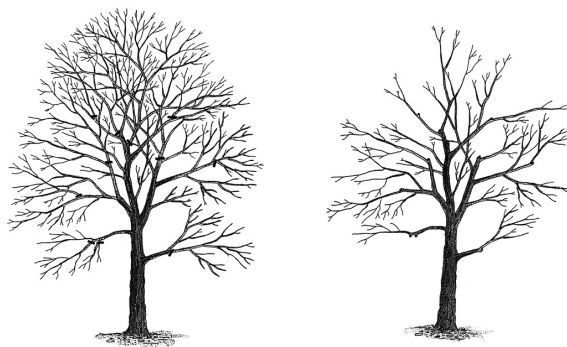


Before

After

**Crown Reduction (Drop Crotching)** - When a tree has grown too large for its permitted space cut back many of the major branches to an outward growing side branch.

Drop Crotching



Before

After

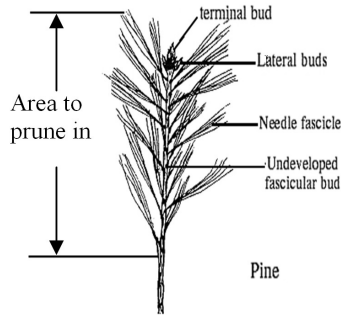
**The late dormant season is best for most pruning**, because with the new growth the wound sealing process begins. There are some exceptions: Oaks and Elms should be pruned during December, January, February. Prune Honey Locusts when they are still dormant in late winter. To avoid 'bleeding' the following trees should be pruned in late spring or early summer: Maples, Butternut, Walnut, Birch, Ironwood and Blue Beech.

## Evergreens

Evergreens can be grouped into 3 main pruning groups:

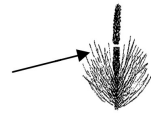
### Needled Evergreens: Pine, Spruce, Fir, Hemlock -

In spring these trees produce a single flush of growth from terminal buds. Normally very little if any pruning is required. Needled evergreens grow primarily from buds set the previous year and have few if any latent buds. They don't normally re-sprout from old wood, which has no existing buds. Prune back only to one or two-year-old wood which has existing buds, if necessary, or back to where it forks into a side branch. Pines can benefit from having the 'candles' half-pinched back to encourage branching at a young age. This can be done during spring when the candle has almost extended to its full length but before the needles are fully developed.



Pine

Pinch back pine candles



### Narrow leafed Evergreens: Juniper, Arborvitae, Yew, False Cypress -

Grow in spurts during the spring and summer giving the appearance of continual growth. In the spring, before the new growth begins, thin back very long branches to a side branch or parent branch. Repeat every year or two as needed to maintain size. Up to a quarter of the branches can be thinned back. Juniper, arborvitae and false cypress seldom produce new buds on old bare wood. Green foliage must remain on any branches that are cut back. Yews can be cut back more severely. For upright Narrow-leaf Evergreens, thin outward growing side branches to an inward-growing side stem.



**Broadleaf Evergreens: Rhododendron, Azalea, Boxwood** - Thin to a fork, a side branch or latent bud to reduce height and control size after flowering. Boxwood can be sheared as a formal hedge. If they become too large drastic pruning to bare wood can be applied. Rhododendrons grow vigorously and flower better the following year if the oldest flowers are removed just after they fade.

### Rejuvenating overgrown shrubs

Every year for three or four years cut back about one third of the oldest stems to the ground or thin tall stems back to lower side branches. For healthy vigorous plants drastic rejuvenation by cutting all branches back to ground level can be practiced.

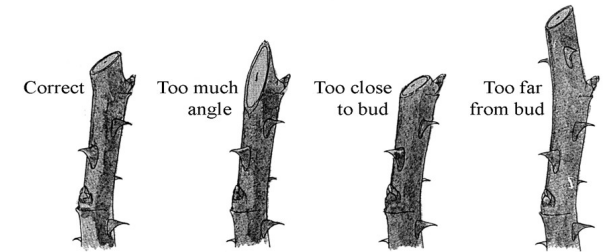
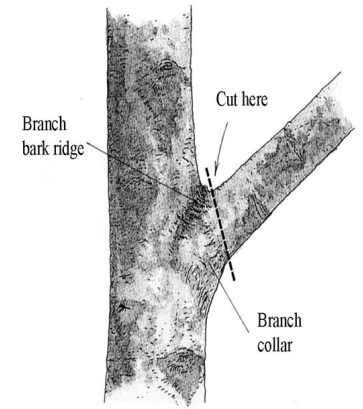
The only way to renew pine, spruce, fir and other needled evergreens is to cut back to a whorl of branches on a main or side stem. By repeating this procedure for several years, it is possible to gradually lower the height and narrow the width.

### Evergreen Hedges

**Formal Hedges** - Shear a hedge before growth begins in spring so that the flush of new growth covers the pruning cuts. Follow the instructions for pruning deciduous formal hedges with the following exceptions. At planting time cut back long leaders but otherwise do not prune them until two years after planting. Do not prune pine, spruce or fir deeper than into the current season's growth. Use hand pruners to cut pines before the needles unfold; hedge shears can be used to prune spruce and fir hedges after the growth hardens in midsummer or before new growth begins in spring. Arborvitae and False Cypress resprout from old wood that still has foliage. Yew and juniper, which have a longer growing season than other narrow leaf evergreens, often need pruning at least twice during the growing season to retain a neat, formal look. Prune these hedges just after the first flush of spring growth and then again after the second flush in midsummer.

**Informal Hedges** - For a soft, natural look, thin evergreens into an informal hedge using hand pruners. This avoids disfiguring the foliage. Except for pines, which must be pruned before the new growth hardens, evergreen hedges can be thinned anytime.

Where to Make Cuts:



 **Winter Greenhouse**  
growing with you...

W7041 Olmstead Rd  
Winter, WI 54896  
(715-200-5430)

[www.wintergreenhouse.com](http://www.wintergreenhouse.com)  
[info@wintergreenhouse.com](mailto:info@wintergreenhouse.com)