

# Pruning Trees and Shrubs

## Reasons for Pruning

- To train a plant
- To maintain plant health
- To improve the quality of flowers, fruit, foliage, or stems
- To restrict growth

## Tools

Hand shears – Bypass type preferred; anvil type also available; for branches up to ½ inch in diameter.

Lopping shears – For branches ½ to 2 inches in diameter.

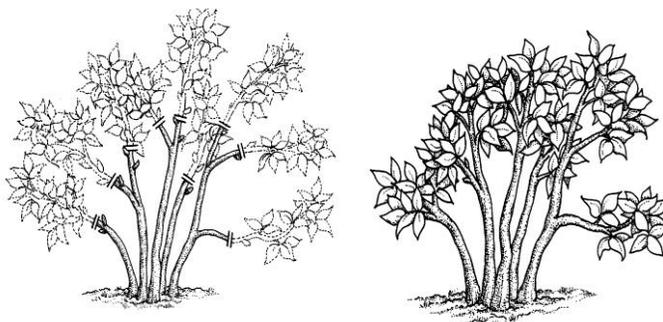
Pole pruners – For pruning overhead without a ladder.

Hedge shears – Manual and power types.

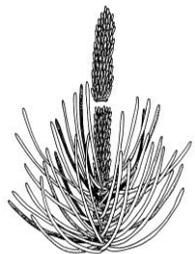
Saws – A variety depending on the need.

## Types of Pruning Cuts

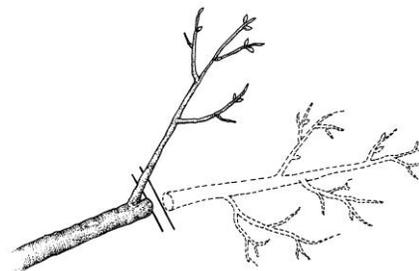
Heading cuts remove the tip of a shoot or branch. This increases the number of new branches at the cut end; the shrub or tree becomes bushier when growth resumes.



You can encourage conifers to be bushier by removing all or part of the new “candle” in spring before it begins to develop side branches.



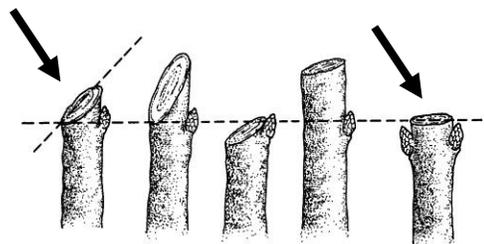
Thinning cuts remove an undesired branch or twig by cutting at the point of origin, whether at ground level or from the trunk or the parent branch. Thinning cuts result in a more open plant and don’t stimulate excessive new growth.



## Where to Cut Stems with a Small Diameter

In general, cut back twigs and small branches to just beyond a vigorous bud, or cut at an intersecting branch.

When cutting to a bud, choose a bud that is pointing in the direction new growth is desired. Cut close enough to avoid leaving a stub but not too close to damage the bud. The arrows in the illustration indicate correct cuts.



(Illustrations this page: OSU Extension Service)

## Time to Prune

In general, prune in late winter before new growth starts.

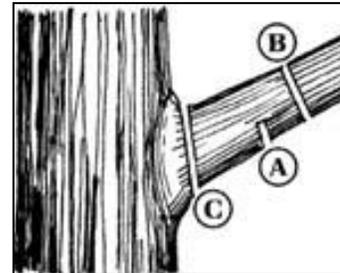
For flowering shrubs, prune at a time to minimize disruption of blooming. Spring flowering shrubs (Table 1) bloom on last season's growth; prune them soon after they bloom to promote vigorous summer growth. Some shrubs that bloom after June (Table 2) do so from buds that are formed on the current year's shoots; prune these shrubs in late winter to promote vigorous spring shoot growth.

Table 1 Shrubs that bloom on last year's growth		Table 2 Shrubs that bloom on current season's wood	
Botanical name	Common name	Botanical name	Common name
<i>Cercis chinensis</i>	Chinese redbud	<i>Abelia x grandiflora</i>	Glossy abelia
<i>Chaenomeles japonica</i>	Japanese quince	<i>Buddleia</i> spp.	Butterfly bush
<i>Chionanthus virginicus</i>	Fringe tree	<i>Callicarpa japonica</i>	Japanese beauty bush
<i>Daphne</i> spp.	Daphne	<i>Caryopteris x clandonensis</i>	Bluebeard
<i>Deutzia</i> spp.	Spring-flowering deutzia	<i>Ficus carica</i>	Fig
<i>Exochorda racemosa</i>	Pearl bush	<i>Hibiscus syriacus</i>	Shrub althea
<i>Forsythia</i> spp.	Forsythia	<i>Hydrangea arborescens</i>	Hills of snow
<i>Kerria japonica</i>	Kerria	<i>Hydrangea paniculata</i>	Peegee hydrangea
<i>Lonicera</i> spp.	Honeysuckle	<i>Hypericum</i> spp.	St. Johnswort
<i>Magnolia stellata</i>	Star magnolia	<i>Lagerstroemia indica</i>	Crape myrtle
<i>Philadelphus</i> spp.	Mock orange	<i>Rosa</i> spp.	Bush rose
<i>Pieris</i> spp.	Andromeda	<i>Spiraea bumalda</i>	Anthony Waterer spiraea
<i>Rhododendron</i> spp.	Azalea & rhododendron	<i>Spiraea japonica</i>	Mikado spiraea
<i>Rosa</i> spp.	Rambling rose	<i>Symphoricarpos</i>	Coralberry and snowberry
<i>Spiraea</i> spp.	Early white spiraea	<i>Vitex agnus-castus</i>	Chaste tree
<i>Syringa</i> spp.	Lilac		
<i>Viburnum</i> spp.	Viburnum		
<i>Weigela florida</i>	Old-fashioned weigela		

## How to Remove a Large Branch

When pruning a tree, remove thick, heavy branches flush with the collar at the base of the branch rather than flush with the trunk. (The collar is a slight bulge at the base of a branch where it connects to the trunk.) Removing the collar causes serious damage regardless if the pruned branch is living or dead.

Branches larger than 1½ inch in diameter should be pruned in three steps as shown. The first cut (A) is on the underside of the branch and about 12 inches from the trunk; saw about half way through the branch. The second cut (B) is on the upper side of the branch, about 4 to 6 inches beyond (A); saw until the branch swings down of its own accord. The final cut (C) removes the stub from the trunk.



(Diagram: USDA Tree Guide)

## Additional Information

Oregon State University publications are available online at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog>

*Pruning Landscape Trees* (WAEB 1619)

*Training and Pruning Your Home Orchard* (PNW 400)

*The American Horticultural Society Pruning & Training* by Christopher Brickell & David Joyce

*Cass Turnbull's Guide to Pruning* by Cass Turnbull; also see [http://www.plantamnesty.org/plant\\_prune.htm](http://www.plantamnesty.org/plant_prune.htm)

*Pruning: A Practical Guide* by Peter McHoy

*The Pruner's Bible: A Step-By-Step Guide to Pruning Every Plant in Your Garden* by Steve Bradley

Home Orchard Society [www.homeorchardsociety.org](http://www.homeorchardsociety.org)

USDA Tree Guide <http://www.na.fs.fed.us/SPFO/pubs/uf/treeguidehtm/chapter4.htm>

## For Master Gardener™ Advice

- Call Home Horticulture Helpline: 503-655-8631 (Clackamas County), 503-821-1150 (Washington County), or 503-445-4608 (Multnomah County).

- For more 10-Minute University™ handouts and class schedule, visit [www.cmastergardeners.org](http://www.cmastergardeners.org)

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