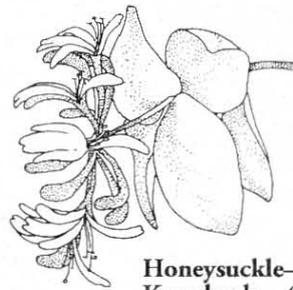


## PRUNING



**Honeysuckle**—(*Lonicera*)  
**Kerrybush**—(*Kerria*)  
**Lilac**—(*Syringa vulgaris*)  
**Magnolia**  
**Mockorange**—(*Philadelphus*)  
**Pearlbush**—(*Exochorda*)  
**Siberian Peashrub**—(*Caragana*)  
**Spirea**—spring flowering types  
**Sweetshrub**—(*Calycanthus*)  
**Viburnum**  
**Weigela**

A yearly removal of a few older limbs to ground level and an occasional slight cutting back of new growth usually suffices. Make cuts to remove larger branches flush with the remaining branch. Where smaller branches are pruned, make the cut about one-eighth of an inch above a node or bud. Don't lop off the whole top of a plant indiscriminately, leaving unsightly stubs to die back to another branch.



**Summer Flowering Shrubs**—Most summer and early fall flowering shrubs blossom on wood grown the same season. Even when severely pruned in late fall or anytime before new growth starts, all blooming can be expected to be normal the following summer. A few plants in this group may be cut back to the ground in the fall and still produce ample bloom. Among them are Buddleia or butterflybush, Snow Hill hydrangea, Anthony Waterer and Froebelia spirea, and Vitex or Chastetree.

**Restoring Overgrown Flowering Shrubs**—Overgrown, flowering shrubs present a problem. In many cases, it is more economical to dig up the old plant and start over again

The selection of plants to fit specific areas will eliminate the need for much of the pruning often required to keep these plants within limits of the home landscape. Pruning which conforms to the natural shape of a tree or shrub is less time consuming and helps to retain the inherent beauty of the plant. A better understanding of plant characteristics and growth habits will result in a maintenance program involving a minimum of labor.

### PURPOSES OF PRUNING

Much of the pruning required to maintain a home planting should consist of a systematic removal of dead, diseased or unnecessary portions of shrubs or trees. Unnecessary portions include crossed or crowded branches and poor crotches (particularly on trees). This kind of pruning will give the leaves nearer the center of the plant more light, and more of the plant's growth energy can then be concentrated on desirable branches.

A very important reason for keeping larger plants and trees free of unnecessary branches is to prevent much of the damage that may result from high winds, ice or wet snow. Observations indicate that periodic pruning will reduce serious injury, particularly in trees.

### CONSIDER THE PURPOSE OF THE PLANT

In order to plan a pruning schedule properly, the home gardener must consider the appearance of the plant at all seasons of the year. In addition

to flowers, a carefully selected nonevergreen plant may have summer foliage of a desirable shape and texture, bright colored fruit or autumn leaves, pleasing winter twig shapes and, in a few cases, unusual bark color or texture.

Narrow-leaved evergreens, such as hemlock and yew, may be planted primarily for the winter mass effect of the dark green foliage. Others, such as some of the junipers, change to a purplish-bronze in late fall. Some arborvitae change to a yellowish-green. Some narrow-leaved evergreens produce colorful fruit. Broad-leaved evergreens, such as mountain laurel and rhododendrons, in addition to glossy winter foliage, often produce very attractive flowers.

### PRUNING OF SPECIFIC GROUPS

The removal of dead, diseased, broken, crossed or other undesirable branches is the first step in pruning both evergreen and nonevergreen plants.

The flowering period, although short, is commonly used to separate the majority of nonevergreen flowering plants into spring and summer flowering types.

**Spring Flowering Shrubs**—Most plants which flower in the spring produce their blossoms on wood that matured and initiated buds the previous year. Therefore, pruning is advised right after flowering so as not to interfere with this year's or next year's bloom. Among plants in this group are:

**Beautybush**—(*Kolkwitzia*)  
**Chokeberry**—(*Aronia*)  
**Deutzia**  
**Firethorn**—(*Pyracantha*)  
**Flowering Quince**—  
(*Chaenomeles*)  
**Forsythia**

Revised by Edmond L. Marrotte  
Consumer Horticulturist  
Originally written by Kenneth Bradley  
Professor Emeritus, Plant Science



UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT  
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM

Helping You Put Knowledge To Work

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. John P. H. Brand, Interim Director, Cooperative Extension System, The University of Connecticut, Storrs. The Connecticut Cooperative Extension System offers its programs to persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex or disability and is an equal opportunity employer.

with either a young plant of the same type or, preferably, a slower-growing plant more appropriate for the location. However, to rejuvenate an overgrown plant, a system of gradual removal may be begun. Remove about one-third of the oldest wood to a point as near the ground as possible, distributing this pruning over the whole plant. New growth usually starts from near the base of the plant. On grafted or budded plants, take care not to make cuts too close to the graft union.

Following this system of gradual removal for about three years should complete the plant's rejuvenation. Thereafter, a yearly removal of a few of the oldest branches should keep the plant in a presentable condition. A few rapid-growing plants, such as Van Houtte spirea, common lilac, privet and some species of honeysuckle, when cut back to the ground in late winter or very early spring, will produce new shoots in the spring. When this bushy, new growth is from one to two feet high, select

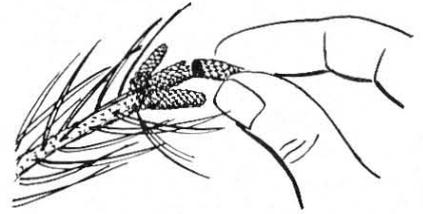
enough of the strongest stems to grow into a desired plant, and remove all others. Most plants, particularly those that are nonsuckering or those propagated by grafting or budding, cannot be rejuvenated in this manner.

**Shrubs Grown Primarily for Effects Other than Flowers**—If shrubs valued for their outstanding fall foliage color are pruned during the summer, leave sufficient foliage to retain their beauty. Plants grown for a fall fruit effect should not be subjected to a drastic pruning during the summer. A slight pruning after the blossom period and another during late winter should suffice.

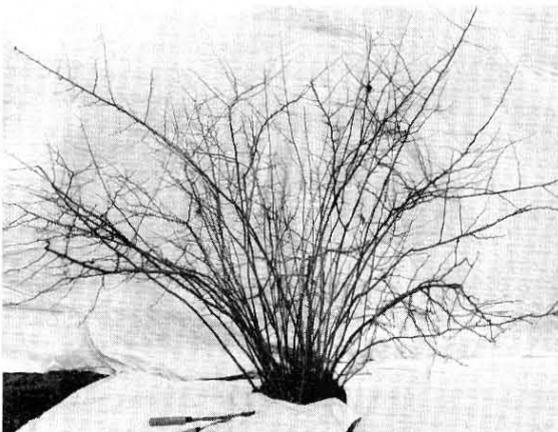
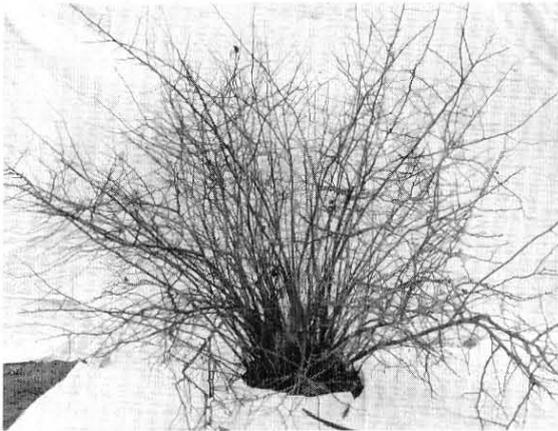
Shrubs grown for their unusual stem coloration usually are most effective when the branches are young. Therefore, an annual and somewhat drastic removal of older branches will induce sufficient new growth to keep the plant in brightest color. The red-twigged dogwoods and the green-stemmed kerrybush are examples of plants improved by this type of prun-

ing. This frequent renewal pruning is not necessary on those plants having mature bark of ornamental value, such as the mottled effect of Kousa dogwood and stewartia, or the winged effect to some euonymus.

**Narrow-Leaved Evergreens**—The coniferous evergreens, such as fir, hemlock, pine and spruce, seldom need pruning if allowed room to expand. They typically grow with one central leader and a broad, pyramidal shape. Occasionally the terminal branchlet of side branches is trimmed back to induce a more dense growth. On pines, this is done most easily by cutting or breaking off about two-thirds of the new soft candlelike tip growth in early spring.



**QUINCE**—Top: before pruning; bottom: after pruning.



**JUNIPER**—Top: before pruning; bottom: after pruning.



**YEW**—



Narrow-leaved evergreens, such as false cypress, juniper, yew and arborvitae, may be pruned at almost any season of the year, except possibly when new soft growth is developing during the spring. Some of the narrow, upright junipers seldom require any pruning. Much pruning of narrow-leaved evergreens would be unnecessary if more care were used in selecting specimens, with regard to the mature size of the plant and the area involved.

When shearing is considered necessary it should be done in the spring prior to the period of new growth. This allows restriction without a severe formal and unnatural outline, since the following new growth will tend to restore the natural irregular effect. Unfortunately, since both homeowners and professional landscape maintenance personnel are usually very busy with other forms of spring work, much of the pruning is often carried on during the slack periods of the summer season. A better method than shearing is an irregular

cutting back with pruning shears of the terminal growth of the longest branches. This will restrict the plant without making the result too severely formal. Overgrown yews and some junipers will tolerate much more severe cutting back than will arborvitae and false cypress. The former typically have foliage deeper within the plant, and new foliage may bud out along the older branches.

**Broad-Leaved Evergreens**—As a group, broad-leaved evergreens, such as mountain laurel, pieris and the various rhododendrons, require comparatively little pruning. Where easily accessible, break off the faded blossom clusters when the flowering period is over.

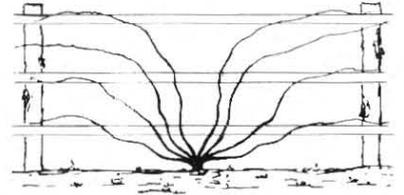
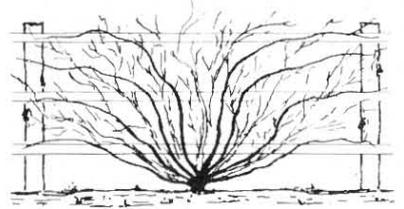
Preventing seed formation saves that portion of the plant's energy for use in increased growth of side branches and more flower buds for the following spring's blossoms.

Rapidly growing broad-leaved evergreens often need two other types of restrictive pruning. Remove those occasional faster-growing top branches to prevent a poorly shaped, spindling appearance. To develop a low-branched, more compact plant, remove a few of the top-most branches each spring, thus promoting more new growth near the bottom and sides.

Neglected rhododendrons and mountain laurel sometimes become very tall and leggy. Removal of some of the larger secondary branches growing at the top of the plant may induce new branches to sprout from near the bottom of the plant. Occasionally, it is more satisfactory to replace the plant. Overgrown unsightly mountain laurel or hardy species of rhododendron, such as rosebay, are sometimes cut back to ground level (in late winter) in an often successful effort to cause new shoots to develop from the roots. This produces a lower, more compact specimen.

**Roses**—The pruning of climbing roses can be greatly simplified by removing a few of the old canes to the base after they flower. The amount of removal depends upon the amount of yearly growth. If the canes are fanned out against a fence or trellis, leave eight to 12 of the young, vigorous canes. Those remaining canes having dead flower clusters may be improved in appearance by removing

the clusters to within two or three inches of the cane. In early spring, remove any dead wood.



Early spring is the best time to prune the garden types of roses such as hybrid tea and floribunda. If pruned severely in the fall, any further loss of canes by winterkilling might mean the complete loss of the plant. Any additional pruning needed depends upon the type of blossoms desired. For flower effect in the garden, cut canes back only to about 18 to 24 inches. For fewer but large blossoms with longer stems suitable for cutting, prune the canes back to within eight to 12 inches of the graft union. Remove fading flowers to improve appearance and to facilitate additional bud formation.

**Vines**—The main objectives in pruning vines are to limit their spread and to remove dead wood. Careful selection of a vine with a rate of growth suitable for its allotted space will eliminate the need for much of this restrictive pruning. On rapidly growing types, it may be necessary to cut the plant back severely to induce growth near the base. This also may result in better flowering.

**Hedges**—The frequent shearing of some of the fast-growing non-evergreen hedges may be one of the most time-consuming operations on a home landscape. To maintain a formal boxed effect, a homeowner may have to shear once each month during the growing season. Anyone planning to have a hedge as part of the landscape should keep in mind that evergreen hedges such as yew or hemlock, although initially more expensive, seldom require shearing more than once each spring. They also pro-

Top: before pruning; bottom: after pruning.

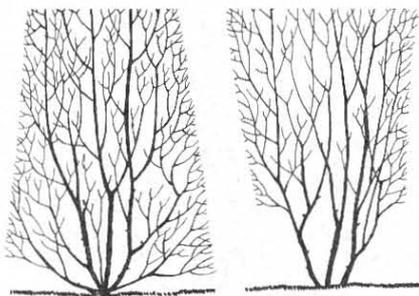


vide an interesting green, winter color effect and are available in variously sized leaves or needles. For low hedges, use compact and low-growing plants such as convexleaf holly and dwarf yew, to virtually eliminate pruning.

Shape the hedge plants so that they are slightly wider at the base than at the top. This permits the lower leaves to receive more sunlight, thus preventing the loss of lower branches. With newly-set plants, this shaping should start before the top growth has been allowed to become long and spindling.

**Nonevergreen Trees**—Here again, selection of a slower-growing tree should enable the homeowner to limit pruning to the removal of dead wood and crossed or broken branches. Remove dead stubs back to the branch collar. Since poor crotches often result in broken limbs, shape a young tree by removing any side branches forming tight, V-shaped crotches. Leave those which form wider, U-shaped crotches.

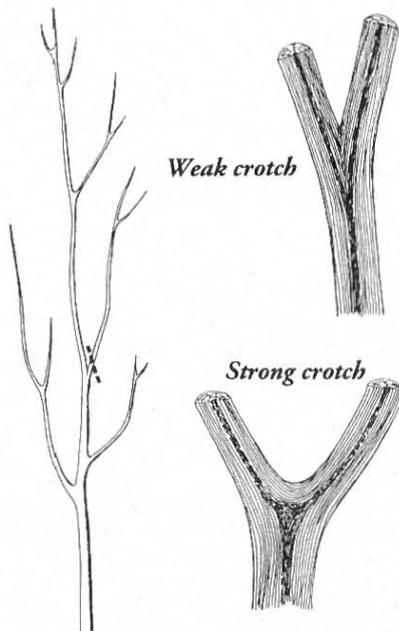
Trees, such as maple, typically maintain a central leader (main stem). Preventing parallel leaders



Right

Wrong

from developing in a young tree will eliminate the possibility of a tight V-crotch splitting during a wind or ice storm several years later. As soon as a second leader is discovered, remove it. If two leaders have already grown to several feet of similar length, cut off the least desirable one. The resulting slight crook at the base of the remaining leader will usually not be noticeable after a few years of growth. If, on a young tree, the top central leader should be so severely damaged by accident or insects as to necessitate its removal, let the best of the remaining nearby branches assume a vertical position. Here again, the resulting



crook at the base of the new leader will usually not be noticeable after a few years of growth.

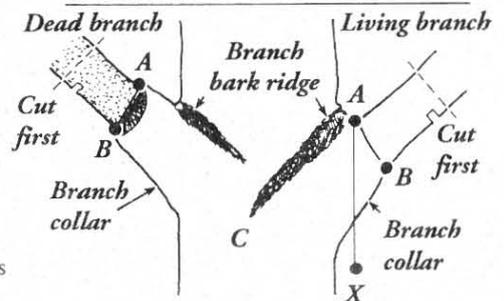
Some tree maintenance pruning is done in practically every month of the year. However, late winter is a good time to trim soft-wooded types that have a tendency to decay, such as willow and poplar, since wood closure takes place more rapidly during the active growth period in the spring.

Trees such as maple and birch have a tendency to "bleed" when wounded by the removal of branches. Although this loss of sap is not considered particularly harmful to the tree, it is rather unsightly, and the moist surface is a good site of entry of fungi and bacteria. Pruning is often done in midsummer when sap flow is negligible. Another advantage is that the leaf-laden branches show areas requiring thinning.

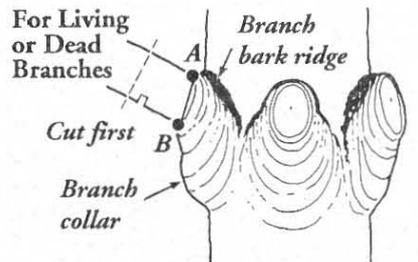
Leave removal of large limbs to professional tree men who are skilled climbers with adequate equipment. However, if any limbs larger than those which can be supported in one hand must be removed by the homeowner, follow the method shown to prevent tearing the bark.

1. Make the first cut on the underside of the branch to prevent tearing.
2. The second cut is made slightly upbranch from the first cut. This removes the weight of the branch and reduces the chance of tearing the bark.
3. Make the third cut from A-B leaving the branch collar intact. The flush cut, A-X, results in a larger, slower closing wound. It is not necessary to paint wounds except, perhaps, on dogwood to minimize borer entry, and on apples and crabapples if black rot is a problem. Use a commercial tree wound dressing. Do not use an oil-based material, which can result in slowing wound closure.

#### Hardwoods



#### Conifers



A jagged wound to the bark will close more quickly if the loose bark is removed. It is not necessary to shape the wound. Again, a wound dressing is not necessary but, if desired, use a commercial product.

