

PRUNING

Most people are hesitant to do any type of pruning because they are uncertain about the results. There are many reasons for pruning a plant but the goal is always to enhance the beauty or increase the usefulness of a plant.

Generalizations

The most important thing to remember when pruning a plant is to retain the plants natural form. Always use the proper type of pruning tool for your particular job. Pruning cuts on small branches of trees and shrubs should be made at 45° angle, preferably 1/8" above a bud. A wound dressing should be applied to all cuts of 1/4" diameter and larger. The best wound dressing is a combination of orange shellac and an asphalt base black paint; however, most commercially prepared wound dressings are satisfactory. It is important to reapply the dressing in successive years until the wound is healed. Hedge plants should be cut back 1/2 at planting time. Each successive pruning should be done within 6" of the last pruning to develop a dense plant. Hedges should also be trimmed so that they are wider at the bottom than on the top. When trimming hedge plants, pruning according to bud location is not necessary.

SHRUBS

Shrubs can be divided into 3 basic groups:

- (1) Spring flowering shrubs which produce flowers on old wood (growth which was produced last year)
- (2) Summer flowering shrubs which produce flowers on current season's growth, and
- (3) Speciality shrubs which are grown for their fruit, foliage or other specific reasons.

Spring flowering shrubs should be pruned immediately after their blossoms start to fade. Pruning these shrubs late in the growing season will remove some of the wood on which flowers are to be produced next spring. Examples of spring flowering shrubs are: azaleas, chokeberries, chokecherries, deutzias, forsythias, juneberries, lilacs, mayday tree, flowering plums and bridal wreath spirea.

Summer flowering shrubs should be pruned in the spring before growth starts. Examples of summer flowering shrubs are: annabelle hydrangea (prune to 1st pair of buds above ground) peegee hydrangea (remove old flowers and thin out to encourage larger flowers) anthony waterer spirea, froebel spirea, and gold flame spirea (cut back 1/2 of plant height).

Speciality shrubs should be pruned early in the spring before growth starts. Dead and injured wood should be removed when the plant comes into leaf. Examples of speciality shrubs are: barberries, buckthorns, caraganas, cranberries, dogwoods, euonymus, ninebarks, alpine currant, honeysuckles, sumacs, purpleleaf sandcherry, smokebush, viburnums, winterberries, and potentilla.

EVERGREENS

The natural form of an evergreen is usually the most desirable. Pruning should be limited to general shaping and correcting of growth defects. Some evergreens, such as junipers, arborvitae, yews, and hemlocks, grow continuously throughout the growing season. Pruning of these plants should be limited to the clipping of ragged branches and the trimming of new growth in June to control size and shape. In spring pines put on a flush of growth called candles, they must be pruned at this candle stage before they become woody. Pruning at any other time will cause dead stubs. To promote a dense plant 1/2-2/3 of the candle should be removed. Pruning should never be done into the previous years growth. Spring is also the best time to prune spruce or firs.

TREES

Most newly planted trees have been pruned and shaped at the nursery, therefore, further pruning may not be necessary for several years. There are, however, several diseases that you should be aware of that can infect trees if they are pruned at the wrong time.

Oak trees should be pruned in Dec., Jan. or Feb. in order to reduce the risk of becoming infected with the Oak Wilt Fungus.

In order to reduce the risk of infection by a bacterial disease called Fireblight, apples, pears, flowering crabapples, mountain ash, hawthorns, and cotoneaster should be pruned only when they are dormant.

Maples, honeylocust, walnuts, birch, ironwood and elms have free flowing sap which bleeds if pruned in late winter or early spring. This bleeding has not been proven to hurt a tree, but looks unsightly. The best time to prune these species of trees is in early summer.

We recommend that for larger trees which need extensive pruning you use a reputable tree trimming company.

WATERING

It is extremely important that newly transplanted trees and shrubs are watered regularly. Many factors such as soil type, humidity, temperature, wind, building obstructions, and mulch affect the amount of moisture a particular plant needs and receives. Therefore, even during periods of regular rainfall some plants may need supplemental watering.

Soil type has a great influence on water availability. Most of the time the soil around the foundation of a house is backfill material consisting of sand and gravel, where as the soil 10 ft. from the house may be a heavy clay. Even if the trees and shrubs in a yard have been properly planted and backfilled with a good black dirt, the surrounding soil will have a large affect on water availability. Because of the many factors affecting the amount of water a plant may receive it is difficult to give a general schedule for supplemental watering. It is usually considered that one thorough watering once a week is sufficient. A thorough watering is accomplished by placing a hose at the base of a plant and letting the water run at a slow rate for 2 minutes. On the average 30 minutes are needed to properly water a foundation planting. It is also important to keep in mind that large plants and evergreens need more moisture than small shrubs. Regular watering should be continued into the fall until the ground freezes. This is of particular importance for evergreens because they retain their leaves throughout the winter and are continually losing water through them. Once the frost has left the ground in the spring a regular watering schedule should again be implemented.

FERTILIZING

Carbon, oxygen, water, nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium are considered the building blocks of a healthy plant. Carbon and oxygen are obtained in large quantities by the plant from the air. Water, nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium are almost exclusively obtained by the plants from the soil. Nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium each has its own role in plant growth. Nitrogen essentially controls the vegetative (leaves, stems) growth rate of a plant. Phosphorus is essentially for proper root growth and development, where as potassium is an important element in fruit and seed maturity.

Most newly transplanted trees and shrubs, if properly backfilled with a good, rich soil, will not need to be fertilized the first growing season. However, a root starter applied at the time of planting can be helpful.

Plants should be fertilized in the spring, (May 15) late summer (Aug.15) and fall (Oct.1) of the 2nd and successive growing seasons. Our recommended fertilizing method for landscape plant material is the Ross Root Feeder System. The advantages of this system are that-

- (1) It is versatile and easy to use
 - (2) Water is applied with the fertilizer reducing the risk of fertilizer burn and aiding in nutrient uptake.
 - (3) Fertilizer is applied at root depth where it will do the most good.
- The Ross Root Feeder comes with complete instructions for use and various fertilizer cartridges are available for trees, shrubs, evergreens, fruit tree, and roses. You can also fertilize, at the specified times, with other commercially available fertilizers which have a nutrient ratio close to 1-1-1.