



## Pruning and Plant Maintenance

*Ideally the amount of pruning and plant maintenance you need to do will be minimized by selecting the correct plants for your landscape. Sometimes pruning is unavoidable, however, and in those cases using the proper timing and technique will make the process as painless as possible for you and your plants. Improper pruning can eliminate blooming, destroy aesthetic value, and even lead to the death of a plant. If you have questions about your plant feel free to ask us.*

### Pruning Guidelines

Do not assume all plants need to be pruned. Many plants grow best with no pruning. In some cases, however, pruning or plant maintenance is beneficial. Branches may be removed to shape a tree or shrub, old growth may be removed to stimulate new growth, and dead stems and leaves may be removed to clean up the garden. Here are a few examples of beneficial pruning or plant maintenance:

- Removing any shoots that develop from the understock of a grafted plant (especially weeping plants)
- Removing branches to shape a dogwood tree or increase the visibility of the lower trunk
- Removing old growth in a forsythia to stimulate new growth
- Removing old flowers from perennials to encourage re-blooming
- Removing dead foliage and stems of perennials in the early spring

### Pruning Timing

The correct time for pruning depends upon the growth stage of the plant and weather conditions. Here are some general timeframes:

- Prune spring flowering shrubs soon after they finish blooming
- Prune late flowering shrubs in the winter or early spring
- Prune most deciduous shade trees in the winter
- Prune maples, walnuts, and cherries in the late spring or early summer

### Pruning Technique

Selecting the right time is part of the process, using the correct technique is just as important.

- Make clean cuts
- Cut just outside the branch collar (the slightly raised ring of bark at the base of a branch)
- When shearing a hedge make sure the bottom of a hedge is as wide or wider than the top
- Avoid tearing or peeling the bark below a cut
- Many plants will branch at the site of pruning, so choose different levels of the canopy for cuts
- Do not cover pruning cuts with paint or any other sealing product

**Caution:** Be aware that some plants require specific pruning to perform best. For instance, not all hydrangeas should be treated the same—different species require different pruning regimes. Be certain you are doing the right thing before you start cutting!