



THE ART OF PRUNING

WHY PRUNE?

Pruning is essential for healthy growth and can be as simple a task as removing a dead flower to thinning out a mature tree. There are six main reasons for pruning regularly:

- Pruning helps to shape a plant, encouraging a vigorous framework on which flowers and fruit can develop freely. Pruning allows the sun to reach all parts of the tree or shrub to promote even growth.
- Overcrowded branches prevent free air circulation within the plant which can lead to fungal infection and provide sheltered breeding sites for harmful insects. An open crown or canopy encourages healthy growth.
- Branches that cross over and rub against each other develop wounds which become sites for disease. Pruning limits the spread of disease by removing the affected branches and cleaning the wound to enable it to either heal naturally or with the aid of a sealing agent.
- Dead branches threaten people and buildings so remove them before they break off and cause damage.
- Leggy and overgrown plants sometimes die of neglect but if regularly pruned their lives can be extended for many years.
- Pruning is carried out for aesthetic or practical reasons where the size of a hedge or specimen tree needs to be limited. Pruning can also enhance the beauty of a tree or shrub by accentuating its character, a technique used by bonsai artists.



Bad pruning can lead to disease.

WHEN TO PRUNE

The common practice is to prune after flowering or fruiting. In the case of perennials this usually occurs in late summer or early autumn. Evergreen trees and shrubs can be



given a light prune at any time of the year but more extensive work should be carried out in winter. It is best to prune deciduous trees in winter when the framework of the tree is easily visible, but light pruning can also be undertaken when the tree is in leaf. In our climate climbers can generally be pruned all year and is usually necessary to curb growth. Prune roses in June and July, even if they are still flowering but if you live in a frost prone area delay this job until August. Pruning palms is simply a matter of removing dead fronds and this can be done at any time of the year.

HOW TO PRUNE

The general rule is to prune just above an outward facing bud. Where a branch joins a trunk aim to cut close enough to the collar to make a clean slice but not too close to cause a rip to appear in the trunk's bark, nor too far away to form a 'hat peg'. If a branch is very large it may be necessary to prune it back in several stages to avoid damaging the rest of the tree.

THE REWARDS OF PRUNING

There is no greater pleasure than to breath new life into an old tree or encourage a repeat flush of flowers on a shrub by judicious pruning. Once you've got a feel for it, pruning becomes second nature and is not only practical but pleasurable too.



Avoid dangerous hat pegs.



Prune close to the branch's collar.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- *Secateurs*
- *Long-handled loppers*
- *Bow saw or pruning saw*
- *Stout pair of gloves*
- *Ladder*

N.B. Make sure all tools are clean and sharp before starting.

