

## PRUNING

The first thing to know about pruning is that the more you prune, the more there will be for you to prune. Pruning encourages new growth so it will never keep plants in a confined area, never change a plant's growth habit, and never solve spacing problems. Pruning will, however, train or guide growth, will improve the quality of flowers, fruit, foliage, and branching, and will maintain vigorous plant growth and health.

The first step in pruning is to select the proper tools. Handheld pruning shears can be used to cut stems up to 1/2" in diameter. Lopping shears have longer handles that provide extra leverage and make it possible to cut stems up to 1-1/2" in diameter. Hedge shears can be used for trimming formal hedges or when a wall of foliage is desired. Narrow, curved pruning saws are good for sawing off crowded stems or branches in tight, narrow spaces. A chain saw may have to be used to saw branches larger than 3" in diameter. There are also loppers and saws mounted on the ends of extension poles to help reach overhead branches.

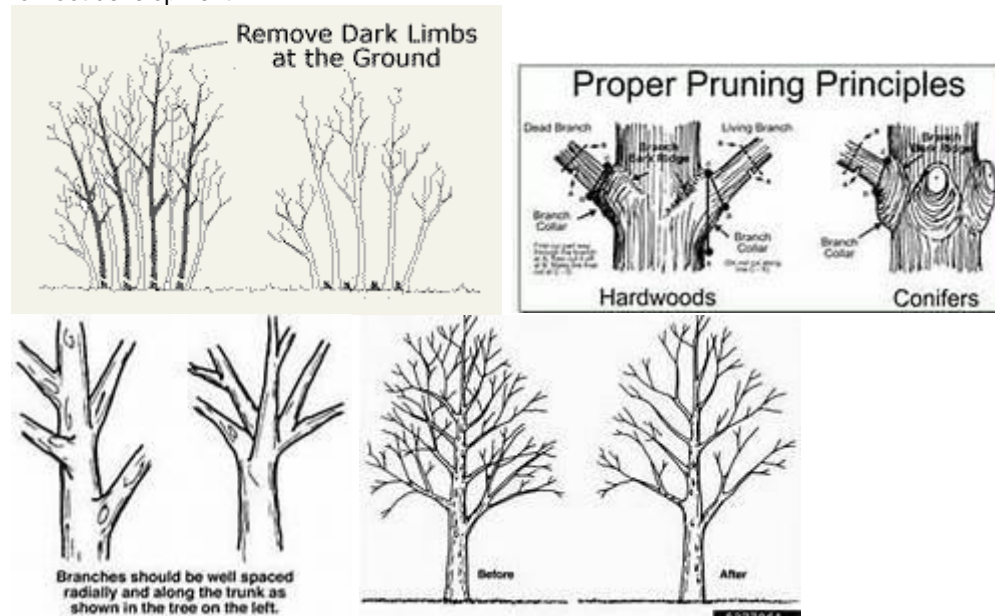
Late winter or the dormant season is the best time to prune but it may be done any month as long as the timing is right so as not to prune of flower buds that have set for the following season. For spring flowering shrubs, the best time to prune is late winter or immediately after the plant has flowered.

Summer-flowering shrubs should be pruned in late winter or early spring before new growth starts. Pruning after the plant has leafed out can be harmful to the health of the plant because it depletes energy stored in those branches and leaves. It can also cause a dwarfing effect on some plants. Dead or diseased branches, suckers, water sprouts, crossing-over branches, and multiple leaders can and should be removed at any time.

Do not cut off the tips of branches. Prune back to a lateral shoot or branch. When pruning larger branches, be careful not to cut too close to the main branch. These flush cuts must be avoided because they leave large wounds that make the plant more susceptible to diseases and insects.

If shrubs have been neglected for years, they will need what is called a rejuvenate pruning. This involves a process of selecting and removing 1/3 of the oldest branches over a 3 year period. By pruning these branches as low to the ground as possible, light will be able to reach the center of the plant and encourage new growth.

Pruning at the time of planting should be limited to broken, crossing, crowded, or rubbing branches. The new plant needs all of its healthy branches to produce leaves that in turn produce carbohydrates needed for root development.



We carry a wide array of pruners, pole pruners, saws and IC Leaf bags for your clean up projects.

Pleasant Valley Garden Center \*1301 S. Gilbert St \*319-337-3118 \*www.pleasantvalleyic.com