



# The Basics of Pruning

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The best pruning times are variable. Fall and Winter in the Pacific Northwest are general suggestions. You never know when they will occur.

## **Pruning in Autumn and Winter**

### **By Jo Poultney**

You might wonder why we prune plants at all, after all they don't get pruned in the wild. If we don't prune plants, trees and shrubs they won't die, they will just get bigger and bigger and your garden will end up looking a bit unruly. There's nothing wrong if you like the slightly 'wild' untidy look. But if you do like a garden with a bit of order, then there are some pruning jobs you can get on with during autumn and winter.

#### When to prune

Most trees and shrubs should be pruned during the dormant season when you are less likely to cause stress and damage to the plant. As a general rule it is best to save winter pruning until late in the season, late February or March, to reduce any risk of new shoots being frost damaged.



#### Which plants to prune?

Fruit trees such as apples and pears should be pruned every winter to ensure a good crop of fruit the following year. Prune free-standing trees from November to March when the tree is dormant. Espalier/fan trained fruit trees should have leaders pruned in November. If your tree is large or near to your house it's probably worth enlisting the services of an expert tree surgeon. Even if you want to tackle to job yourself, a tree surgeon will be able to give you advice about the health of your tree and where best to prune.

Shrubs need only be pruned to suit your own taste for shape and size. The only other reasons to prune shrubs include: to remove dead stems or branches, to thin out dense or tangled branches, or to remove all-green shoots from variegated shrubs.

Shrub roses are best pruned in winter. They respond well to hard pruning. Remove dead, thin and decayed wood and shorted main stems by about one third.

Clematis falls into two main types - those that flower early and those that flower late. Only prune the late flowering varieties in winter, from February to early March.

Winter pruning wisteria encourages the development of the short-flowering spurs that produce flowers in spring. Prune any time between mid-October and mid-March.

Even shrubs in outdoor planters can benefit from a yearly tidy up. Container grown shrubs are often used as a centre piece and therefore shape and size are important. Prune box trees in containers in autumn/ early winter to maintain their shape.

Which tools to use?

There are many tools used for pruning but the essential ones include a good pair of pruning shears, lopping shears, hedge shears, hand saws and chain saws for larger jobs.

How to prune

Before you begin to prune proper, make sure you remove any dead or diseased wood. Open out the centre of the plant by removing any tangled or crossed branches. Prune each stem back to just above an outward facing healthy bud or shoot. Make a clean cut which is slightly angled away from the bud. This prevents water from running onto the bud and provides a smaller healing surface for the shoot. Reduce each branch of stem by at least a third. Remove any suckers, particularly on roses or lilac trees. Finally remove any old leaves to prevent the spread of disease.

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integral part of any garden - they enhance the overall design and say a little something about the person to whom the garden belongs.

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## **Tree Pruning and Training for Healthier Trees**

### **By Barbara Volkov**

Tree pruning conifers during the dormant season will minimize sap and resin flow, but they can be pruned at any time. Tree pruning the trees that have showy flowers also needs to be done while dormant so you can see the structure, maximize wound closure, reduce disease and also to eliminate any excessive flow of sap.

Flowering shrubs also need dormant pruning for the same reasons above but some may also need pruning at other times. Trees and shrubs that blossom in early spring, the dogwood and red-bud for instance, need to be pruned right after they flower. Many flowering trees can be susceptible to fire blight, a



bacterial disease, which can spread by pruning. These trees, such as crab apple, pear, varieties of hawthorn, mountain ash, pyracantha, and flowering quince need to be pruned during the dormant season. Those that flower during summer or fall should also be pruned

during dormancy. Dead branches, on the other hand, can be removed at any time.

Fruit trees will not develop to the proper form or shape without any pruning or training. Properly pruned and trained fruit trees will yield a higher quality fruit earlier and their live span will be longer. The objective to pruning and training is to develop a strong tree framework that will be able to support a large crop of fruit. If fruit trees are not trained in the proper way the angle of the branches will be much too upright and can cause breakage with a heavy crop. This will cause a reduction in the productivity of the tree and shorten its life. Another aspect of annual pruning and training is to get rid of all diseased, broken, and dead limbs.

Proper tree training will open up the tree's canopy and allow penetration of maximum light. The majority of fruit on a deciduous tree is formed the previous year as flower buds. The penetration of light is most important in the development of buds along with the optimal fruit set, flavor and quality. Even if a mature fruit tree is growing quite well in full sun, a dense canopy will prevent enough sunlight to reach 18 inches inside the tree. Opening up the canopy of the tree allows for proper movement of air to allow speed in drying to minimize infection and allow penetration of pesticides. A perfectly shaped fruit tree can be a beautiful asset to a garden or landscaping.

In the past pruning has always been the method in forming and structuring fruit trees. Tree training is a more desirable and effective way to enhance the structure and form. Pruning is simply the removal of portions of a tree that correct the structure; training is a newer application where the direction of the growth to a desired form and shape is determined. Training a fruit tree is important for proper development. It is always better to train the direction of the growth than to prune to correct it. Pruning is usually done in the winter while training and pruning is done in summer as well as pruning in dormancy. The purpose of training is to correct the growth of a tree as well as to minimize cutting.

Trees respond differently to summer pruning and dormant pruning. In the fall the energy of the tree is stored in the root and trunk system to support the top section. If removal of a large portion of the tree is done during dormancy, the tree's energy is not changed. In the spring, the tree will react by producing many upright, energetic shoots called water sprouts; these will shade the tree and prevent good development. Heavy pruning during dormancy causes the same problem.

Dormant tree pruning needs to be done late in the season to avoid winter injury. Apple and pecan trees need pruning before peach tree pruning, plum-tree pruning and cherry tree pruning. A practice is to prune early blooming trees last and the later blooming trees first. It is best to prune the older trees first as the younger ones are prone to winter injury with early pruning. Summer pruning reduces a lot of the tree's energy which will result in tree growth reduction. Pruning can begin as soon as the buds start growing, but usually it begins after the growth of vegetation is several inches in length. Generally speaking summer pruning is only to remove vigorous and upright growth and only the cuts that will do some thinning. Summer pruning needs

to be completed before the end of July in order to lower any problems of winter injury.

Barbara has learned a lot regarding tree pruning in order to better quality fruit trees. She has a number of articles regarding landscape on her website Gardeners Garden Supplies so please visit and leave your comments.

Article Source: [http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Barbara\\_Volkov](http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Barbara_Volkov)



## **Fruit Tree Pruning**

**By David S. Rose**

Pruning fruit trees is an art and a science. It is important for good tree health, for larger fruit and ease of picking. The initial formative pruning done on a young tree will influence its overall shape, production and ease of picking through its life. It is important to keep these things in mind when you prune your fruit trees. You must look at your trees with an artistic eye and imagine the tree in a year, two years and full grown.

You must understand the science of pruning to understand the parts of the tree and what each cut will do as it grows. A simple example of this is to understand the difference between a fruit bud also called a fruit spur that will bear fruit and a leaf bud that will generate a leaf or branch that will not bear fruit.

It is important to know how the branch structure grows and the difference between a lateral branch, the main scaffolding, smaller side branches and water sprouts also called suckers.

General fruit tree pruning instructions:

Prune in the winter when the trees are dormant. There are a few exceptions to this.

Prune out all suckers or water sprouts - Suckers are the young shoots that grow at the trees base.

Cut out all broken or diseased branches

Cut out all crossing branches

cut out narrow crotches

Thin branches to allow sun and air movement for fruit ripening

When making cuts don't leave a stub, cut close to the trunk or branch

Make pruning cuts just above and outward facing bud. In the spring this bud will grow away from the center of the tree.



Always use sharp tools for clean cuts. Hand pruners for smaller branches, loppers for up to 1/2" cuts and a pruning saw for larger cuts

Before you start to prune walk around your tree and view it from all angles and get an eye for what you would like your tree to look like and what general shaping ideas you have for the tree. Keep in mind that your trees are living creations and the cuts you make today will govern its shape for the years to come. This is especially true of young trees in their formative stages.

Think openness, sun, large fruit and good ladder sets

There are three basic pruning styles.

Open center, Modified central leader and Central leader

It is important to choose your pruning system when you first plant your fruit tree as the first cuts are very formative. If you are pruning an established fruit tree, prune to the established system.

Open center pruning

Open center pruning is primarily used for stone fruits such as peaches, nectarines and apricots. It can also be used for apples, cherries, and plums.

Central leader pruning is used for apple and pear trees and often used for nut trees.

The Modified Central Leader system has a main leader trunk and three or four lateral branches that are also given equal importance so these scaffolding branches are about the same size as the central leader.

Types of pruning cuts:

Thinning Cuts are used to remove an entire shoot or branch back to a lateral or scaffolding branch.

Heading Cuts are used to remove only the terminal portion of a shoot. This type of cut promotes the growth of lower buds as well as several terminal buds below the cut.

Large cuts also known as bench cuts are used to remove vigorous, upright shoots back to side branches that are outward growing. Bench cuts are used to open up the center of the tree. They may also be used to take out excessive scaffolding branches left by improper pruning of young trees.

Careful pruning cuts will help the tree to heal quickly. Pruning cuts should be flush with the adjacent branch without leaving stubs. Also, when large horizontal cuts are made, they should be slightly angled so that water does not set on the cut surface as this will cause rotting and disease.

Tools of the trade Smooth, clean pruning cuts heal quickly and minimize the likelihood of rot and disease. Before making any cuts, become familiar with the various types of pruning equipment, their uses and limitations. Be sure your equipment is properly adjusted, sharp and in good working order.

Pruning fruit trees is done to keep your trees healthy and easy to work in while pruning and gathering a bountiful harvest of large fruit.

Pruning is easy once you get the hang of it, give it a try. Enjoy the winter pruning! Give thanks for fall harvest! Farmer Dave

Farmer Dave's article on fruit tree pruning will give you a good basic understanding of the general concepts of pruning to get more detailed instructions, come and see Farmer Dave's fruit tree pruning instructions

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Live simply that others may simply live  
See you there!  
Farmer Dave

Article Source: [http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=David\\_S.\\_Rose](http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=David_S._Rose)

## **Guide to Proper Pruning**

### **By Tyler Meahl**

#### Pruning to shape:

In shaping, your artistic side plays a role in determining what form a particular plant should take. Every plant has a natural shape; its growth tends to conform to a natural pattern, whether round, gumdrop shaped, wide spreading, vase-shaped, or arching. Observe what a plant's natural shape is, and then prune the plant in a manner that will allow the



natural form to continue to develop. Remove any excess growth that obscures the basic pattern or any errant growth that departs from the natural form. Use thinning cuts.

When pruning to shape, make your cuts above a bud or side branch that points in the direction you'd like the new growth to take. If you have no preference, remember that generally it is better for a new branch to grow toward an open space than toward another branch. Also, it is generally better for growth to be directed toward the outside of the plant than too ward its interior. Try to eliminate branches that cross and touch one another. Crossing branches may rub together, suffering injury, and are usually unattractive, especially in deciduous plants out of leaf.

#### Pruning for flower production:

Flowering shrubs bloom either from new growth or from old wood, depending on the plant species. Before you prune, determine which sort of growth bears flowers. In this way you can avoid inadvertently cutting out stems that would give you a flower display.

Most spring flowering shrubs bloom from wood formed during the previous year. Wait until these plants have finished flowering before pruning them (or

do some pruning by cutting flowers while they are in bud or bloom). Growth that the shrubs make after flowering will provide blooms for the next year.

Most summer flowering shrubs bloom on growth from the spring of the same year. These are the shrubs you can prune during the winter dormant season without sacrificing the next crop of blooms.

A few shrubs bloom twice or throughout the growing season (many roses, for example). Spring flowers grow from old wood; later blooms come both from recent growth and from wood of previous years. During the dormant season, remove weak and unproductive stems and if necessary, lightly head back remaining growth. During the growing season, prune as necessary to shape while you remove spent blossoms.

Pruning conifers:

These evergreens fall into two broad classes; those with branches radiating out from the trunk in whorls and those that sprout branches in a random fashion. Spruce, fir, and most pines are examples of the whorl type; arborvitae, hemlock, juniper, and Taxus (yew) are examples of random branching conifers. Pruning guidelines differ for the two groups.

On whorl branching types, buds appear at the tips of new growth, along the lengthening new growth, and at the bases of new growth. You can cut back the new growth "candles" about halfway to induce more branching, or you can cut them out entirely to force branching from buds at their bases. The point to remember is that you must make cuts above potential growth buds or back to existing branches. Cutting back into an old stem- won't force branching unless you're cutting back to latent buds.

The random branching conifers can be pruned selectively, headed back, even sheared; new growth will emerge from stems or branches below the cuts. But when you shorten a branch, don't cut into bare wood below green growth; most kinds (yew is an exception) won't develop new growth from bare wood.

Controlling Height: Some conifers-chiefly the random branching kinds, plus deodar cedar and hemlock can be kept at a controlled size, either as dense specimens or as hedges. When growth reaches within a foot or so of the size you desire, cut back all but about 1 inch of the new growth. This will produce enough small side branchlets to make full, dense foliage. Once this

bushy growth forms at the ends of the branches, you can hold the plant to a small size year after year by shortening new growth that develops and cutting out any wild shoots.

Repairing damaged trees: When a conifer has been damaged by cold or breakage, you may have to remove entire limbs. It's almost impossible to restore the natural shape, but you can often make the most of the situation by trimming or training the damaged plant into an unusual sculptural form. If the central leader has been damaged, you can stake one of the next lower branches vertically and train it as a new leader.

Deciduous Fruit Trees:

The rule of Thumb is Deciduous fruit trees should be pruned during winter while the trees are dormant and after the leaves have fallen to the ground but before new buds have swelled. Each type of fruit tree needs to be pruned differently, so it is important to know which kind of tree you're pruning and how to prune it properly.

For example, apples bear their fruit on spurs that bear again and again, sometimes for as long as twenty years. If you whack off all the spurs you'll have no fruit. In general apple trees need very little pruning once a main framework of branches has been established. It's important, however, to cut off all the leaves even from low-chill varieties, such as 'Anna', that may not lose all their foliage in winter. Leaving old leaves hanging on while new ones form can lead to apple scab, a fungal disease that causes black blotches on leaves and then, subsequently, causes the fruit to rot. Apple scab is at its worst during rainy years. Dormant spray helps prevent apple scab.

Plums also bear on spurs. The pruning of mature European plums is minimal, as for apples, but Japanese plums grow so vigorously that they need heavy pruning of new growth.

Apricots bear partly on one-year-old wood and partly on spurs that continue to bear well for four or five years. The older branches must be headed back so that one-fifth of the bearing wood will be replaced. Peaches and nectarines need the heaviest pruning of all: their fruit is borne on one-year-old wood. By pruning them hard, you encourage new growth to replenish fruiting wood. Figs need very little pruning at all except to control tree size and the density of foliage.

Always follow pruning with a Dormant spray to prevent insects such as mites and scale from overwintering and infesting plants. A Dormant spray such as Volck Oil, lime sulfur, or fixed copper should be applied to Roses, Deciduous fruit or ornamental trees every winter after their leaves have dropped to prevent buildup of disease. If any leaves are still clinging to the plant in January, they should be clipped off prior to spraying.

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