



FACEBOOK LIVE SEMINAR

How and What to Prune Now

Spring is knocking on the door and that means it's time to prune! And if the word "prune" strikes fear in your heart, take comfort in the fact that pruning promotes good health in plants – but only when pruning is done at the right time and in the right way. Follow our expert advice below on the proper techniques and tools of pruning crepe myrtles, along with other popular trees, shrubs, and perennials.

PRUNING BENEFITS

Pruning is a regular part of plant maintenance involving the selective removal of specific plant parts. Although shoots and branches are the main targets for removal, roots, flower buds, fruits and seed pods may also be pruned. Pruning not only helps to boost your home's curb appeal but also allows for proper plant growth, as well as helping to control insects and plant related diseases. Some of the other key benefit of pruning trees and shrubs include:

Improved Appearance and/or Health. Prompt removal of diseased, damaged, or dead plant parts accelerates the formation of callus tissue and may limit the spread of insects and disease. For trees, pruning a dense canopy allows for better air circulation and sunlight penetration. To avoid future problems, remove crossing branches that rub or interfere with each other and any that form narrow crotches.

Control Plant Size. Pruning reduces the size of a plant, so it remains in proportion with your landscape.

Pruning can also decrease shade, prevent interference with utility lines, and allows for better access for pest control.

Prevent Personal Injury or Property Damage. Removing dead or low limbs makes underlying areas safer. Pruning can also reduce wind resistance in trees. Prune shrubs with thorny branches back from walkways and other heavily-traveled areas. We recommend that you have certified arborists handle any pruning work in the crowns of large trees.

Train Young Plants. Training main scaffold branches (those that form the structure of the canopy) helps to produce stronger and more vigorous trees. Shaping branches with hand pruners while a plant is young is much easier than pruning larger branches later.

Encourages Fruiting and Flowering. Proper pruning of flower buds encourages early growth. There are also selective pruning techniques that will help stimulate flowering in some species and help produce larger (yet fewer) fruits in others.

Rejuvenate Old Trees and Shrubs. As trees and shrubs mature, their forms may become unruly. Pruning can restore vigor and enhance the appearance of plants.

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PRUNING TOOLS

Pruners are a garden essential and are the perfect tool for performing light pruning tasks like removing small deadwood, limbing up small trees, deadheading, etc. A good pair of pruners can make your gardening work much easier and keep your plants happier.

Choosing garden pruners that fit your hand, have nice sharp blades and are manufactured of high-quality materials should be high on your checklist of selection criteria. Buying the cheapest pair on the shelf (or the most expensive for that matter) is usually not the best option.

TYPES OF PRUNER

Bypass Pruners

- The most common and popular type of hand pruners.
- Stainless steel, curved blades that uses a scissor-like action to pass next to, not on top of, the lower surface.
- Perfect for making smooth, clean cuts.
- Prevents crushing of soft plant tissue.
- Perfect for trimming small limbs and branches, limbing-up small trees, deadheading, and other light pruning tasks.

BYPASS PRUNERS BY BRAND

The Terra Verde Bypass Pruner

- Features a heat-treated blade that will stay sharp through multiple uses and non-stick coating for clean smooth cuts.

- Durable.
- Clean scissor-like action and a molded grip.
- Adjustable tension safety lock.

Burgon & Ball Pruners

- A little more expensive than Terra Verde pruners.
- Made of high carbon steel, so blades stay sharper longer.
- Comes with a replacement blade and spring, as well as tool for adjusting spring tension.

Felco Pruners

- Top-of-the-line pruners with cutting power and precision.
- Features two blades - one very sharp cutting blade. The other is not sharp (anvil blade or hook).
- Lifetime warranty.

OTHER PRUNERS

Choose bypass loppers when you want to trim back overgrown trees and shrubs. The long handles provide more leverage, so you can cut thicker stems with less effort. Good for small limb work (pruning cypress and conifers, etc.)

Bypass Loppers

- Feature long handles (24-30 inches) allowing a far reach and exert high leverage with minimal exertion for thick wood cuts.

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- Good for small limb work.
- Comfortably cut anything that can fit entirely between the blades.

Folding Saw

- Good for branches with some weight (dogwoods, Japanese maples- thicker wood trees).
- Features a double edge saw that folds easily back into the handle for safe, quick storage in a back pocket.
- Heat-treated blade that stays sharper longer.
- Push and pull back cutting action provides optimal cutting efficiency.

Hedge Shears

- For pruning and shaping evergreen shrubs like boxwood, hollies, hydrangeas, etc.
- Large scissors with long handles designed to cut a number of small branches at the same time.

Compact Shear

- Small, compact pruners.
- Ideal for light pruning and cleaning up (veggies, berries, herbs, etc.).
- Great for precision work or harvesting veggies herbs, berries, deadheading or pruning houseplants.
- Good for small hands.

Houseplant Shear

- For light pruning, harvesting veggies, and cleanups.

- Features rounded shaped blades for easy access to dead stems and for deadheading (without damaging surrounding stems and foliage).

Herb Scissors

- Provides easy cutting of herbs.
- Five-in-one stainless steel blades quickly cuts herbs into thin strips.
- Good for preparing herbs for cooking and to create garnishes.
- Cuts cleanly, without tearing or bruising delicate leaves.
- Features spring mechanism making cutting effortless.

Gloves

- Protect hands from thorns and other hazards associated with pruning and gardening.

Holster

- Conveniently keeps your gardening tools close at hand.

Fertilizers

McDonald Greenleaf (organic or traditional) - Are a great, general all-purpose fertilizer developed specifically for plants in Hampton Roads. Greenleaf releases nutrients slowly, keeping container plants healthy and strong. It's what we use to fertilize our plants.

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WHAT TO PRUNE NOW

- Abelia (Feb)
- Evergreens (Jan-March)
- Bayberry/Waxmyrtle (March)
- Beautyberry (Jan-March)
- Boxwood (Feb-March)
- Butterfly Bush (Jan-March)
- Vitex/Chastetree (Jan-March)
- Clethera/Summersweet (Jan-March)
- Crepe Myrtles (Feb)
- Euonymus, (Jan-March)
- Gardenias (Jan-Feb)
- Fruit Trees
- Berries (Feb-March)
- Rose of Sharon/Althea (Jan-March)
- Hydrangea (old – after bloom, new – can do now)
- Holly (March)
- Japanese Maples (Feb)
- Nandina (Jan-March)
- Ornamental Grasses (March)
- Osmanthus (Jan-Feb)
- Pittosporum (March-April)
- Ligustrum (Jan-April)
- Roses (Feb-March)

THINGS TO PRUNE THIS SPRING AFTER THEY BLOOM

- Azaleas
- Indian Hawthorne
- Forsythia
- Rhododendron
- Camellias
- Daphne
- Lilac

TIPS

Disinfect Pruners - We recommend disinfecting pruners after each use to help minimize the spread of disease from one plant to another.

Fill a spray bottle with water and bleach (alternatively mouthwash or rubbing alcohol). Use a 1 to 10 ratio of water to bleach (or mouthwash or rubbing alcohol), 10 oz. water to 1 oz. cleaning solution. Wipe extra moisture off pruners. Next, wipe down pruners with a little WD40 before you put them away to prevent rusting.

Sharpening Tools - Sharpening stones are the most popular and traditional way to sharpen knives and tools. They are versatile and can be used to sharpen almost any edge. Or, you can take your tools somewhere to be sharpened for you.

DEMONSTRATIONS

To view pruning demonstrations of the following trees and shrubs go to <https://www.facebook.com/mcdonaldgardencenter/videos/753630685530499>

- Crepe Myrtles
- Evergreens
- Grasses – liriopse too
- Holly
- Boxwoods
- Nandina
- Japanese maples
- Abelia
- Roses

Shrub Pruning Calendar link below. You can find many helpful gardening publications including pruning, through the Virginia Cooperative link below.

https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/430/430-462/430-462_pdf.pdf

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