

Pruning in Spring

Early spring is a perfect time to prune; shrubs and trees have yet to leaf out, making it easy to view any branches that require pruning. Pruning can be done for several reasons:

To maintain the shape and size of a tree or shrub

Most trees and shrubs can be pruned regularly to prevent them from outgrowing their current space. Keep in mind however, that a tree or shrub should never be pruned back more than 1/3 at a time. Do not 'top' the tree or shrub - care must be taken to prune individual branches.

To control diseases

Any branches that are diseased, dying or dead should be pruned out. When pruning these out, cut them down to their base and do not leave a stub. Prune out any crossing branches, or branches that are growing towards the center of the shrub.

To maintain an ornamental shape

Hedges can be pruned now to maintain their formal shape.

To maintain vigor

Many plants that stop flowering or fruiting need to be thinned out. An abundance of branches can prevent strong, healthy branches from optimal performance.

What to prune

Early spring is the perfect time to prune deciduous (plants that drop their leaves in fall) shrubs, trees, roses, etc...

The exceptions are:

- Birch - If pruned too early, they 'bleed' out sap. Prune in winter or after leaves have unfurled.
- Elm - Due to the potential spread of Dutch Elm disease, Elms should be pruned only between October and March (this is when elm bark beetles are NOT active).



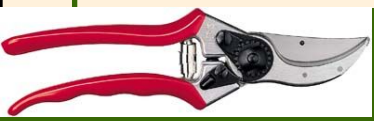
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- Spring Flowering Shrubs - Shrubs that flower on last year's growth (lilac, double flowering plum, mock orange) must be pruned **right after they finish flowering**.

Pruning Tools

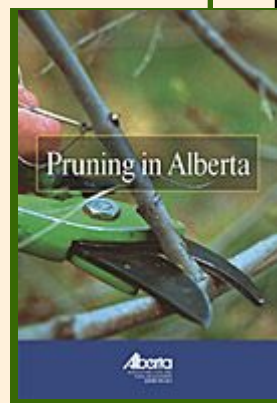
Pruning shears, loppers and saws can all be used for pruning. Shears are used for small branches up to one inch in diameter; loppers can be used for branches from 1" to 2.5" (depending on the type of lopper). Loppers have leverage and allow for larger branches to be cut. Pruning saws can be used on branches larger than 2.5", or on all dead branches.

There are two styles of pruning shears available: bypass and anvil. Bypass pruners work with a "scissor" type action, cutting cleanly through the branch. Anvil pruners may crush stems, so are best used for "dirty work" - for example cutting long branches down to size so they can be discarded/composted.



Felco and Corona pruners are both high quality pruners, guaranteed for life. Strong steel blades and comfortable grips make both a great choice for any backyard gardener.

For more information on pruning pick up a copy of "Pruning in Alberta" by Alberta Agriculture. It gives valuable information on pruning your trees, shrubs and evergreens in a simple yet concise manner. \$5.99.



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