

# Basic Tree Pruning for the Home Owner

Trees are the most valuable of all landscape plants. Care for them properly, and your trees will live a long and healthy life. Start tree maintenance the day you plant the tree and continue throughout its life.



Proper pruning is essential and helps your trees live longer. Good pruning keeps your trees attractive, healthy and less susceptible to injury from natural forces, such as strong winds. On the other hand, poor pruning practices, topping in particular, make trees less attractive, more

prone to pest and weather problems and, ultimately, shortens their life span.

You may want to hire an arborist, a trained tree service professional, to prune medium and large scale trees. These trees deserve professional maintenance

because of their landscape value. Professional tree work will cost more, but you should view it as an investment.

If you don't have the knowledge or equipment to properly prune larger trees, you

may injure yourself, damage the tree, nearby buildings, utility wires, or other landscape plants while pruning. These pruning jobs are best left to professionals. Arborists are listed in the yellow pages under tree service.

If you want to prune smaller trees, here are a few helpful tips.

Use the right tools. You can prune most shrubs and small trees with a hand pruning shears, a lopping shears, and a hand pruning saw. Pruning tools are available at garden and hardware stores, and through garden supply catalogs.

Although, you should do most pruning from late winter through spring, other times of

the year are also acceptable times to prune. Some trees will bleed when you prune them in early spring. Examples include maples and birch. This heavy sap flow does not hurt the tree, but you can prevent it by pruning during the growing season. Pruning wounds are best left unapainted.

Pruning paint does not stop bleeding or prevent decay, and in some cases may even increase decay. Tree wound dressings are not recommended for most pruning cuts, including those made on maples, birch, and other bleeders to stop sap flow.

When pruning trees, there are several types of branches to

remove. Prune out dead branches, whenever you see them. Remove broken or diseased branches. And, remove branches that are rubbing together or growing back toward the tree's crown. These last branches will eventually rub against other branches. Finally, prune out water sprouts and suckers.

You'll see water sprouts and suckers on flowering crabs, maples, and certain other trees. Suckers are long straight shoots that grow out of the ground from the tree's roots, and water sprouts are long straight shoots that grow off of the trunk and main branches.

Certain trees have multiple leaders, including maples, ash, and lindens. Trees grow best and develop a better branch structure when you train them to a single leader. It's important to remove all but the strongest leader early in the life of trees prone to developing multiple leaders.

Occasionally, you may need to remove lower branches on mature trees. You can usually do this anytime of the year. Because these branches are usually large, it's best to use the three-cut pruning method for removal. To do this, make an undercut halfway through the branch, a foot out from the trunk. Make a second cut a few inches beyond the undercut. You will remove the branch with this second cut. Remove the stub with your third and final cut. The three-cut method prevents the falling branch from tearing a large section of bark from the trunk.

No matter what kind of branch you're pruning, the rule is to never leave a stub. Stubs are unattractive, and result in larger decay columns than flush cuts. Make pruning cuts flush to the branch collar when the collar is evident. Branch collars are the natural swellings that occur where a branch joins a larger branch or the trunk. (MJF)

## Pruning Tools —The Basics

The keys to pruning trees and shrubs are a basic understanding of pruning techniques and knowing when to prune plants. It's also important to have the right tools. There are various types of pruning tools. The best tool for the job is determined by the size of the plant material and the situation.

Hand pruners or pruning shears are generally used for cutting branches up to 3/4 inch in diameter. There are two basic types of hand pruners. Scissor-types have curved blades that overlap (scissor action) when making the cut. Anvil-type pruners have a sharpened upper blade which cuts against a flat surface (anvil). Each type is available in different sizes. Generally, scissor-type hand pruners are preferred over the anvil-types. Sharp, properly used scissor-type pruners make close, clean cuts. Anvil-types can't cut as close as scissor-types and are

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## Low Maintenance Trees & Shrubs for Your Landscape

After a major snow or wind storm, many of us are forced to remove damaged trees. The next task is to select trees to replace the one's you lost. When replacing those unsalvageable trees, you may want to consider a low maintenance tree. These are trees that need minimal pruning, have minor insect or disease problems, have a slower growth rate, and add value to your landscape. Consider selecting one of the trees on this list. After these trees become established, they will beautify your landscape for years to come. (MJF)

### Trees

Name	Mature Height (Ft)	Crown Spread (Ft)	Growth Rate	Mature Form	Fall Color
American Hophornbeam	25-40	25-30	slow	oval	yellow
Amur Maackia	20-30	20-30	slow	round	green
Amur Cork Tree	20-30	15-25	medium	round	yellow-brown
Dogwood, Pagoda	15-25	15-25	medium	round	reddish purple
Douglas fir	40-80	12-20	medium	pyramid	
Gingko	40-60	30-40	slow	oval	yellow
Golden rain Tree	20-25	25-30	slow	round	brown
Hackberry	50-70	30-40	slow	vase	yellow
Hardy Rubber Tree	40-60	40-60	medium	round	yellow-green
Hornbeam, European	40-60	30-40	medium-slow	oval	yellow
Japanese Tree Lilac	20-25	15-25	medium	vase	green
Linden, Little-Leaf	40-60	25-35	medium-slow	pyramidal	yellow-brown
Magnolia, Saucer	20-30	20-30	medium	round	yellow-brown
Magnolia, Star	15-20	10-15	slow	oval to round	yellow to bronze
Maple, Norway	40-50	30-40	medium	oval to round	Yellow to orange
Maple, Sugar	50-70	40-60	slow	oval to round	yellow to red
Maple, Amur	15-20	10-15	medium	round	scarlet
Maple, Tatarian	15-20	15-20	medium-slow	round	yellow-red
Maple, Black	50-70	40-50	slow	round	yellow
Mountain Ash, Korean	40-50	20-30	medium	round	yellow-orange
Oak, Swamp White	40-60	20-40	medium	oval	yellow-brown
Oak, Shingle	50-60	50-60	medium-slow	round	yellow to red
Oak, Chinkapin	40-50	40-60	medium-slow	round	yellow to brown
Oak, Bur	50-70	50-70	slow	oval	yellow-brown
Oak, White	50-70	30-50	slow	round	purplish
Redbud, Eastern	20-30	25-35	medium	vase	yellow (purple flowers)
Smoketree, Common	10-15	10-15	medium	round	red-purple
Spruce, Colorado	30-60	10-20	medium-slow	pyramid	
Spruce, White	40-60	10-20	medium	pyramid	
White Fringe Tree	15-25	15-25	slow	round	Yellow
Witch Hazel, Common	15-30	20-25	medium	oval	Yellow

### Shrubs

Name	Mature Height (Ft)	Spread (Ft)	Growth Rate	Mature Form	Fall Color
Barberry, Japanese	4-6	3-5	medium	round	scarlet
Cinquefoil, bush	2-4	2-4	slow	round	yellow
Cotoneaster, spreading	5-6	6-8	medium	round	yellow, red
Euonymus, winged	15-20	15-20	slow	round	red
Ninebark, dwarf	3-4	3-4	medium	round	yellow
Siberian Pea Shrub	15-20	12-15	medium	oval	yellow
Viburnum, Arrowwood	8-10	10-12	medium	round	red
Viburnum, Wayfaring	10-12	10-12	medium	round	red