

## Pruning

The best time to prune is at the end of the dormant season or as close to the time that the plants break dormancy. This is usually when the sap runs. Any pruning wound will heal more quickly when done close to sap run. Pruning earlier in the winter may result in the desiccation of the tissue near the pruning wound. This is especially true with evergreens.

### **CONIFERS**

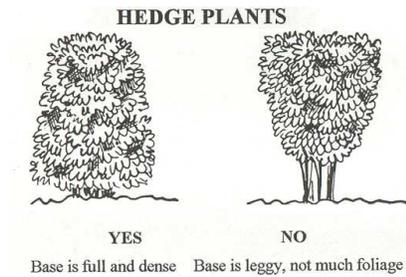
- ◆ Require some annual pruning, especially yews, junipers, arborvitae's and mugo pine when used as hedges or in foundation planting.
- ◆ Pruning should be done mid to late May before they break dormancy. A second pruning can be done around mid July, after their flush of new growth. No pruning should be done after early August.
- ◆ Shearing will result in the creation of a shell of foliage. This is OK for hedges and for creating a formal look.
- ◆ Selective pruning will maintain a more natural shape of the plant. This is done by pruning back longer shoots the point where there is a side shoot.
- ◆ Mugo Pine – Prune after new growth begins. Snap off a portion of the new growth (candles), removing 1/2 to 2/3 of the candle. Some pruning must be done every year to maintain desired size and shape. No new shoots will start from the previous years growth, so do not prune back too far.
- ◆ Spruce, Fir & Pine Trees – Need no regular pruning. If pruning is necessary, prune before new growth appears and only prune into last year's growth. All cuts should be near a bud. On young trees, the leader could be cut back to 8" each year and cut back to a north facing bud.

### **DECIDUOUS PLANTS**

- ◆ Renewal pruning – best time is near the end of the dormant season. Prune out oldest canes or shoots first, removing at ground line. This will allow more light to reach the lower portion of the plant. New sprouts will usually occur just below the cut. If you start with older plants, remove about 1/3 of the old shoots each year. After the plant has been thinned out, the balance can be pruned back to maintain desired shape and size.
- ◆ It's better to remove a few large shoots every year, but you must start when the plant is young.
- ◆ Renewal pruning can be used on most deciduous plants including Dogwood, Forsythia, Lilac, Viburnum, Weigela, Barberry, Aronia (Chokecherry), Honeysuckle, Mockorange, Spirea and Potentilla.
- ◆ Exceptions – For plants that bloom in spring like Forsythia, Lilac and Magnolia, pruning could be done right after the plant has finished flowering. This allows you to enjoy the flowers before they are pruned off. Use the same pruning steps as mentioned above. For plants that bloom in summer like Potentilla and Spirea (especially pink flowering Spirea), cut back 50%. This will promote the sprouting of new growth low to the ground. The new shoots will produce the best foliage and flowers. On older plants remove the largest, oldest stems at ground level. About 1/3 of the stems each year.

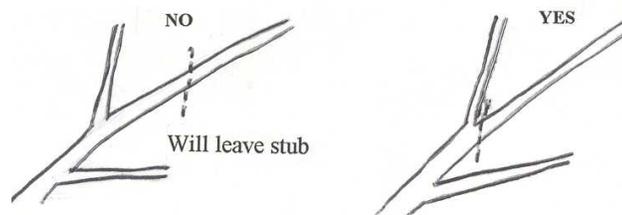
### **HEDGE PLANTS**

- ◆ Privet, Honeysuckle, Alpine Currant, and Dwarf Ninebark can be pruned as prescribed earlier, heavy stems at ground level and remaining stems back to 24 inches. In some cases you may want to cut plants down to near ground level and essentially start over with the hedge. When shaping a hedge its important to keep the bottom of plant slightly flared. The width at the base should be wider than at the top. (See Below)



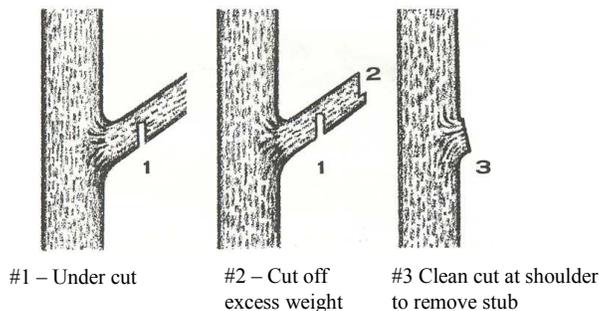
## **FLOWERING CRABS**

- ◆ First remove all suckers from the base of the plant. This can be done anytime. Then remove all water sprouts. These are shoots that grow up vertically from the main branches of the tree. They should be pruned right after the tree leafs out. This will result in less sprouting in the future. Next, remove any broken branches. Finally, remove any conflicting type branches – branches that cross each other; are growing too low to the ground or are growing back toward the center of the tree. Remember never to prune any branch tips. Always try to cut back to a junction. Leave no stubs.



## **SHADE TREES**

- ◆ Ash & Maples – (Both are opposite budding plants) Always prune to a single leader. If the tip has to be cut off, then remove one of the remaining two buds to eliminate any forking. If you are removing a fork, take out the smallest or less dominant looking of the two. You may have to remove the shoot on the southside so the other fork fills out nicely.
- ◆ Honeylocust – Over pruning can increase the trees susceptibility to cankers. Don't remove more than one major branch per year. Locusts are very shade intolerant, so you will find some dead branches on the lower portion of the tree and inside near the main stem. These should be pruned out.
- ◆ Oaks – By city ordinance, Oaks can only be pruned during the dormant season of October 31 to March 15.
- ◆ All Trees – Pruning should be done only if necessary. Such as: broken branches from windstorms, heavy snow or ice accumulation or vandalism, limbing up branches that are growing too low to the ground, removing limbs that are damaging structures or growing into utility lines. When pruning large branches remember to first make an under\cut near the base of the branch that is being removed. Then cut off the excess weight of the branch a few inches up from the base. Finally make a clean cut at the shoulder of the branch to eliminate the stub.



**NOTE:** A lot of pruning can be eliminated if the right plants are planted in the right location. Usually any excess pruning is the result of poor planning. On the other hand, there are no maintenance-free plants. Even compact or dwarf plants need some pruning.