



BEINING NURSERY & LANDSCAPING, LLC

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TO PRUNE OR NOT TO PRUNE?

Correct trimming and pruning practices in our landscapes are probably one of the most misunderstood parts of gardening. Pruning is an acquired skill that can even become an art form. Volumes have been written on the subject, and most of us simply don't have the time to learn all there is to know. With that said, here are some general guidelines.

For best appearance and health of the plants, prune to maintain their natural shape. Pruning individual branches with a hand pruner (when practical) is more attractive and healthier for the plants than trimming with a hedge shears. **HEAVY TRIMMING IN MID SUMMER AND EVEN MODERATE PRUNING IN THE FALL OFTEN CAUSES PERMANENT DAMAGE TO LANDSCAPE PLANTS.**

Pruning and trimming stimulates the whole plant into a state of rapid, tender growth. Heavy pruning and trimming in summer or early fall causes this growth at a time when the plant is beginning the process of going dormant for the season. An untimely or extended hard freeze, or a midwinter thaw followed by a sudden drop in temperature could then cause damage to the plant. Since damage from late trimming isn't noticeable until the following spring, people often don't realize this is what caused the damage to their plants.

Pruning and trimming prior to or during the growing season, however, will allow plant tissue damaged in the trimming process to heal as quickly as possible, thus reducing the likelihood of insect and disease infections. Prune evergreens in the spring or early summer; spring flowering plants like lilac, viburnum, and forsythia right after they bloom; and summer flowering plants like roses, hydrangea and Rose of Sharon in the spring. Most perennials should be cut to the ground in late fall after the foliage completely dies or in early spring before new growth emerges. Most ornamental grasses should be cut to within 3"-4" of the ground in the early spring.

For anyone interested in learning more, we have a great book available: [Pruning Simplified](#), that covers the subject in more depth.