The Do’s and Don’ts of Pruning

WHY PRUNE?
1. Maintain Health and Appearance
   Remove the 3 D’s:
   a. Dead
   b. Diseased
   c. Damaged

WHY PRUNE?
2. Train plant growth

WHY PRUNE?
3. Structure

WHY PRUNE?
4. Thinning
   a. Increase air flow
   b. Remove crossing branches
WHY PRUNE?
5. Control Plant Size

WHY PRUNE?
6. Fruit and Flowering

WHY PRUNE?
7. Reinvigorate

WHY PRUNE?
8. Value

PRUNING TOOLS
1. Hand pruners
   a. By-pass
   b. Anvil = BAD!
2. Hand shears

PRUNING TOOLS
3. Loppers
4. Hand saws
5. Pole pruners, pole saws, extension pruners
Things NOT to do when pruning

• Don’t use a hack saw

Things NOT to do when pruning

• Use proper safety equipment!

Things NOT to do when pruning

• DO NOT leave stubs

Things NOT to do when pruning

• DO NOT harm branch collar or bark ridge

Things NOT to do when pruning

• DO NOT make flush cuts

IMPORTANCE OF 3-POINT CUT ON LARGE BRANCHES
Wound Dressings DON'T Help!
• Can crack when exposed to sun
• Allows moisture to accumulate behind the dressing
• Actually can promote more disease problems
• Only makes YOU feel better

Types of Pruning Cuts
1. Heading
• Cut stem back to a bud (selective)
• Pruning is local in effect!
• Releases apical dominance

Types of Pruning Cuts
1. Heading
• Shearing or hedging current seasons' growth

Types of Pruning Cuts
2. Thinning
• Removal back to a crotch or point of origin

Types of Pruning Cuts
2. Thinning
• Used to make a canopy less dense
• Lighten load
• Sunlight & buds
Types of Pruning Cuts

2. Thinning
   - Used to reduce height
   - Drop-crotch

3. Deadheading/Pinching
   - Woody and herbaceous
   - Advantages:
     - Extend current bloom or promote 2nd bloom
     - Prevents seed/fruit formation
     - Continued productivity in most annuals and perennials

General Seasonal Effects

- Timing depends on:
  - Plant species, condition, & desired results
General Seasonal Effects

- Dormant Pruning
  - Done in LATE winter – few pests, architecture visible
  - Deciduous plants = less impact on plant vigor
  - Evergreens = least amount of setback stress

- Spring Pruning
  - Bud-break up to shoot expansion
  - Caution – bark slipping

- Early to late spring pruning:
  - This encourages even more growth
  - Sap flow is heavy
  - Oaks and Elms = NOT during growing season!

- Summer Pruning = end of growth flush
  - Remember indeterminate & determinate growth
  - Best time for heavy bleeders
  - Redirect growth of younger plants
  - Pinching back, deadheading, dwarfing
  - General light maintenance – 3 D’s

- Fall Pruning = end of all growth flushes
  - NOT a good time:
    - Decay fungi are sporulating
    - Not enough time to heal
    - May force late shoot growth
    - Must consider when plants flower – new or old wood?

- Avoid pruning in late fall / early winter!
  - Apple trees on left unpruned
  - Trees on right pruned Dec. 10
  - Cold injury caused by early winter pruning!
Pruning at Time of Planting
- Remember purpose in landscape
- Bare-root to develop canopy
- Container, B&B = thinning & 3D's

Pruning According to Plant Type
1. Broad-leaved Evergreens
   - Right space = very little pruning
   - Before period of fast growth – late winter
   - Too early or too late = damage
   - Limited latent buds

2. Conifers and Narrow-leaved Evergreens
   - Maintain primary leader
   - Late winter prune to limb up or thin
   - Late Summer or Fall prune = injury

Pruning According to Plant Type
2. Conifers and Narrow-leaved Evergreens
   - Pinching candles – timing critical
   - Shoot expands before needles
   - Leave part of candle for bud set

   - Mugo pine to control height
Pruning According to Plant Type

3. Evergreen Shrubs
- Selective heading and thinning
- Shearing last resort
- Juniper, Taxus, Arborvitae, Chamaecyparis

4. Deciduous Shrubs
- Thinning cuts
- Important on multi-stem species
- Heading cuts and deadheading
- Dieback shrubs
  - Hydrangea
  - Callicarpa
  - Buddleia

5. Shade Trees
- Primarily thinning cuts
- Remember 3-cut method!
- 3 D’s and limbing-up

6. Flowering Trees and Shrubs
- Based on time of bloom!
- Old or new wood
- May rule
- Old Wood:
  - Forsythia, viburnum, quince
- New Wood:
  - Rose of Sharon, Clethra, Buddleja
Pruning According to Plant Type

7. Roses
   - Keep canopy thin
   - Cut to outward facing bud
   - Remove suckers
   - Some dieback at pruning = leave more than normal

8. Clematis – Group 1
   - Flower on new wood in summer
   - Prune back to lowest pair of strong buds late winter each year

8. Clematis – Group 2
   - Flower on old wood in the spring
   - Prune immediately after flowering
   - Most will tolerate drastic cutting back

8. Clematis – Group 3
   - Flower on old AND new wood
   - Old = big flowers
   - New = smaller flowers
   - Begin renewal pruning in the 3rd year
   - Remove 1/4 to 1/3 of old stems back to 12”

9. Wisteria
   - Pergolas
   - Standards
   - Shrubs
   - Espalier
Pruning According to Plant Type

9. Wisteria
• Marginally hardy in MI
• Winter injury to flower buds
• Needs moisture in Aug

Why Prune Perennials?
• Plants will tell you when (3 D’s)
• Deadheading most common task
• Encourage new growth
• Reduce height; make more dense
• Keep in place
• Pest prevention

Wait Until Spring to Prune

• Seed, form, bark, foliage color, etc.
• Butterfly eggs & bird feed
• Indicate where late emergers are in the garden

Wait Until Spring to Prune

• Insulation through winter months
• Ferns, mums, aster
**Wait Until Spring to Prune**

- Prune before new growth begins
- Remove all dead
- Leave healthy evergreen foliage

**Renovation Pruning**

**A. Deciduous Shrubs**
- Plants with perm. framework = slowly
- Suckering shrubs = down to the ground

**B. Evergreen Shrubs**
- Plants with latent buds (taxus)
- Plants without latent buds (juniper)

**Why Prune in the Fall?**

- If it turns to mush
- To avoid reseeding
- More time in the Fall

**Fall Pruning – When & How?**

- Wait until dormant
- Prune to 2-3" for most
- Prune to 6" to catch snow for insulation
- Remove stubs in spring

**Hollyhock rust**

**Buddleia davidii**

**Coreopsis grandiflora**

**Aquilegia hybrids**

**Taxus**

**Juniper**
What Can Arborists Do For You?

Important Associations:

- International Society of Arborists (ISA) – training & certification programs
- Michigan Forestry & Parks Association (MFPA)
- Society of Municipal Arborists – (SMA)

Espalier

- Trained in a vertical plane
- Takes up less space
- Trained to wall

Espalier

- Free-standing
- Horizontal or vertical pattern

Espalier

- Supple branches
- First season at 45° angle, then arms to 90° in fall
- Avoid spring pruning after establishment
- Summer pruning for dwarfing & spur formation

Pleaching

- Alternative to formal hedges
- Supple branches needed
- Branches woven together in horizontal plane

Pleaching

- Wire support needed to establish scaffold
- Keep canopy thinned
- Summer pruning for control
- Suckering
Pleaching??

Pollarding
- Knobs of callus from repetitive pruning
- Established framework and bold texture
- Sycamore and willows are common

Pollarding
- Dense shade in summer
- Full sun in winter
- Can be healthy and long-lived

Topiary
- Pruning into formal or geometric shapes
- True topiary on its own roots
- Fake topiary – use of wire structure

Topiary – Plant selection
- Best are Buxus and Taxus
- Small foliage; slow growth
- Usually one prune a year
- Privet not a good choice

Topiary – Training
- Promote bushy growth early
- Small = single plants
- Large = multiple plants
- Avoid fine detail – keep it bold & simple
Topiary – Care
- Fertilize in late winter
- Control competition – food, light, etc.
- Remove snow loads
- Slow growers, prune once in summer
- Fast growers, prune multiple times

Topiary – Care
- Shears o.k. with large specimens
- Use hand pruners on large-leaved plants
- Use templates for established geometric shapes
- Always cut lightly

Bonsai
- Japanese & Chinese art
- Miniature replicas of landscapes or mature trees

Bonsai
- Detailed pruning and pinching
- Use of wire to shape and constrict

Bonsai
- Small, shallow root systems
- Re-pot every 2 – 4 years with new soil
- Avoid extreme temps
- Must manage water