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# SIX HELPFUL TIPS WHEN PRUNING TREES

As melting snow gives way to warmer temperatures in the latter part of winter, it's a prime time to consider pruning your trees.

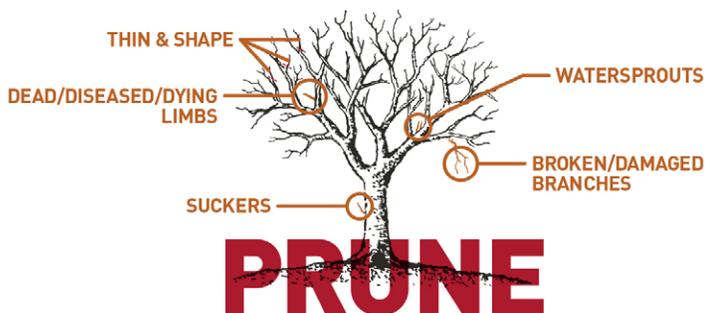
The purpose of pruning is to remove wood that is unproductive or wounded in favor of wood that will produce fruit or contribute to the overall beauty and health of the tree.

For those unsure of how to clip with confidence, here's six helpful tips to remember when pruning your trees.

## WHY PRUNE

Effective pruning means having a healthier, stronger, balanced, safe and productive tree.

Following the winter months, prune to remove the three D's — dead, diseased and dying tree limbs. In addition to enhancing the quality of the fruit and life of the tree, thinning the branches aids air flow, greater exposure to sunlight and prevents moisture from causing mold or fungus problems.



## WHEN TO PRUNE

The ideal time to prune a tree is typically in February or March (Maybe earlier depending in your region and climate.), when the trees are dormant but temperatures are warming up. Of course occasions may arise when it's necessary to cut a tree sooner, so go ahead and do it.

Pruning during the dormant period minimizes sap loss and subsequent stress to the tree. It also minimizes the risk of fungus infection or insect infestation.

A neglected, older tree can be overgrown and difficult to prune. The most important cuts of shaping and forming a tree are made in the first five years of its life.

## BEFORE PRUNING

Before pruning, make sure you have the right tools in good condition. Sharp shears make for clean, easy cuts.

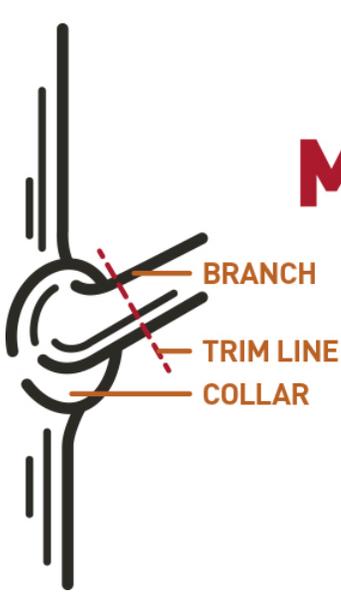
After each tree you prune, remember to disinfect your tools in a solution of 1 part bleach to 9 parts water, followed by soapy water and drying. Tree diseases are easily spread by infected tools.

If your tree is of any size, consider asking a second person to assist you in order to be safe and avoid serious injuries.

## HOW TO PRUNE

When deciding how much to prune a tree, less is better. Each cut causes stress and increases its vulnerability to disease and





# MAKE PROPER CUTS



CHOOSE 10 O'CLOCK & 2 O'CLOCK CUT ANGLES



insects. Limit pruning to preferably no more than 33 percent of the crown to ensure that living branches compose at least two-thirds of the height of the tree. Excessive pruning can lead to reduced health and structural weakness of branches.

When cutting, prune at wide 10 o'clock and 2 o'clock angles.

When pruning to a bud, make sharp, clean cuts close enough that you don't leave a clumsy stub, yet stay far enough above the bud so it won't die. Prune back to buds aimed in the direction you want the limbs to grow.

If you are trimming off a limb, you should cut as close to the other branch as possible so you don't leave too much of a stub. However, make sure you don't cut too close to the collar of the branch or trunk. Cutting into the collar will cause watersprouts and slow healing.

Start by removing the "suckers," limbs growing directly upward from the base of the tree or main trunk, because they suck energy from the tree. Suckers are always weak branches. Leaving a few vertical limbs on the crown of younger trees, however, is a good way to encourage growth.

Once the suckers and inward growing limbs have been removed and the natural shape of the tree is more evident, look for places where limbs are crowded and crossing over each other. With fruit trees, the lower limbs can be eliminated so fruit isn't growing close to the ground.

The final step in giving your tree a light trim is to define the shape of the tree by cutting back the outermost limbs, which

typically grow horizontally and curve upwards. By cutting these back to a downward facing bud, the branch will grow out rather than up.

## DIFFERENT FRUIT TREES

Different types of fruit trees require different amounts of pruning. The general rule with apples, pears, plums, cherries, persimmons, peaches, apricots and plumcots is to remove 20 percent of the previous year's growth. If your tree has not been pruned in several years, a more vigorous trim may be necessary. Even so, remember no more than one-third of the tree should be pruned.

On most fruit trees, try for an open vase shape, which leaves the center more open and spread out so fruit can ripen easier. It is also good to keep the tallest branches within reach so that it's easier to pick fruit.

## AFTER PRUNING

After pruning, be sure to dispose of the pruned wood, especially if it contains diseased material. It's also a good idea to fertilize the tree so it can naturally close the pruning wounds and reduce stress on the tree.

A tree that has turned into a jumbled mess of branches can seem daunting, but pruning is an art that takes time to master. For more information or questions about pruning trees, visit with our knowledgeable and experienced staff members at IFA Country Store.

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