

Pruning 101

Horticultural terms

- Topping
- Heading and Thinning Cuts
- Coppice
- Pollard
- Espalier
- Topiary
- Sucker
- Watersprout
- Branch Collar
- Deadhead

Specialized pruning techniques

- Shearing/hedging (small leaved plants)
- Selective size reduction (cut deep inside)
- Coppicing (to the ground!)
- Cane growers (from the base)
- Grasses and others (grooming)
- Pinching (summer shaping)

Pruning tools

- Bypass pruners are preferred, make a clean cut
- Anvil pruners crush tissue, are better for dead wood
- Long handled loppers come in both bypass and anvil also
- ARS makes a telescoping long reach, cut-and-hold clippers. Great for fruit harvesting
- For heavier branches, get a good folding pruning saw
- Sharpen regularly
- Clean your blades with bathroom foaming cleaner

When to prune

- Pruning stimulates growth
- Trees: winter pruning invigorates & directs, summer pruning dwarfs (fewer leaves)
- Perennials & shrubs: prune after bloom
 - Early bloomers (bloom on old wood), prune in fall
 - Summer bloomers (bloom on new growth) prune in spring
 - Don't prune right before frost when new tender foliage will burn
 - Tip pinching for shape, new growth (like deer browse)
 - Prune after you sharpen your tools!

Topping

- Tree topping harms the tree and doesn't really work
- Proper size reduction takes consistent, forever maintenance!
- "Hydra" effect of topping

Pruning a young tree

- Shape a tree when it is young. Imagine it grown.
- Remove duplicate branches
- Keep foliage on trunk awhile, until the side branches are 50% the size of the supporting branch
- Avoid narrow crotch angles
- Use thinning cuts, not heading cuts
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Pruning a mature tree

- Enhance the natural shape
- Open up dense growth
- Don't leave "coat hangers"
- Don't cut into the branch collar
- Don't try to reduce size
- Hire a certified arborist
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Cane growers

- Plants with multiple stems from the base
- Prune out whole stems to encourage new ones
- Don't chop the tops off (looks unnatural)
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Grasses

- Evergreen – groom or cut only from the bottom
- Deciduous – cut back severely in winter
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Perennials

- Tip pinching to make bushy (spring)
- "Deadheading" to encourage re-flowering (summer)
- Division, if overgrown (fall)
- Cut back for compact regrowth (fall/winter)

Resources

- mastergardeners.org

Santa Clara County info, classes, advice, etc.

- www.canopy.org

Palo Alto tree resources

- www.crfg.org

California Rare Fruit Growers Association

- www.treesaregood.com

Find an Arborist (International Society of Arborists)

- www.plantamnesty.org

Whose mission is to end the senseless torture and mutilation of trees and shrubs!

- www.yerbabuenanursery www.laspilitas.com

Both have excellent pruning advice for natives on their websites