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Summer pruning tames your overgrown landscape and increases curb appeal. Here are tips on when and how to make the kindest summer cuts, increasing both plant health and beauty

When it comes to summer pruning, one method does not fit all. Each plant has its own pruning requirements, timing, and technique. Many plants prefer to be pruned during the winter or spring, when temperatures are cool and the soil has increased moisture.

There are times when you just have to prune in the heat of summer. Examples of much needed pruning in summer are:

Hedges grow to tall and look over grown and shaggy.

Tree limbs on weeping species touch the ground, which invites insects and promotes disease.

Landscapes grow too close to the house causing damage during high winds and channel moisture to your siding.

Bushy shrubs and trees block sunlight and your beautiful view.

Does and Don't to Summer Pruning

Don't prune during drought and heat waves causing increased stress of trees and shrubs. Wait until temperatures moderate, or the cooling shade from cloud cover.

Never prune during rain showers marking you as a human lightning rod. Let landscaping dry out for a day or two before pruning. This also avoids the spread of fungus and plant diseases.



Remove cross branches that prevent sunlight from reaching the inside of trees. This technique increased air flow, thereby decreasing insect and disease infestations in fruit trees, roses and shrubs.

Summer is a good time to prune dead or diseased limbs and branches. Dispose of these infected limbs in plastic bags or burn immediately.

Many perennials will bloom again when spent flowers are plucked from the plant.

Tip from the pro – dead head flowers two weeks prior to a major wedding or party, many flowers will be in full bloom just in time for the festivities, especially summer and fall events.



When pruning weeping trees and shrubs, vary the length of cuts, some long and some shorter. This creates a natural feathered look that blows in the slightest breeze.

Pinch off the new candle growth of evergreens to keep them down to a manageable size.

Trim the new spring growth off the top of fruit trees in mid-summer to keep limbs down to pick-able size.

Important – Keep you Summer Tools Clean

Diseases spread easily in summer. When pruning stressed and infected plants dip pruning tools in bleach water. The disinfecting power of bleach prevents spread and even cleans plants of further disease.

Disinfecting formula = 1 part bleach for every 10 parts of water.

Pruning Paint is a black tar type material that acts like a botanical bandage on plants. Seal each cut that is larger than a pencil. This seals sap in and prevent insects from burrowing into the exposed pruning cut.



Tools of the trade - make sure tools feel naturally good in your hand and doesn't pinch the skin between cuts.

Snips: Small shears for cutting spent flowers on perennials and annuals like dahlia and small roses.

Pruning shears: Hand shears for taming roses and grooming small branches on shrubs. Quality is most

important when choosing these tools. Look for brands noted to hold their edge and stay sharp.

Looping shears: Have short, thick blades and long handles for cutting larger branches.

Hedge trimmers: come in manual varieties, gas powered trimmers like the professionals use and my personal favorite, electric power. Many of the newer battery operated trimmer work quit nicely as well.



Pruning saw: Bowed saw for cutting branches, some have extendable handles for reaching high into trees.

In general, each plant has its own particular pruning requirements. Before you prune, consult a reputable nursery like the arborist here at Watters.

Bottom Line – Fertilize after the pruning is complete with “All Purpose Plant Food” 7-4-4 and your plants will grow their way out of any mistakes made. Think of summer pruning as a mid-season haircut that prevents plants from growing too tall and shaggy, or keeps them from encroaching on your walkway and



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