

Pruning Shrubs and Trees

This playbook provides detailed steps on properly pruning shrubs and trees to enhance their growth and health. It covers the selection of appropriate tools, assessment of plants, actual cutting techniques, and post-pruning care.

Step 1: **Tool Selection**

Choose the correct pruning tools based upon the size and type of the plant. Hand shears are suitable for small branches, loppers for medium branches, and saws for large limbs.

Step 2: **Plant Assessment**

Inspect the plant to identify which branches require pruning. Look for dead, diseased, or damaged branches, as well as those that cross or rub against each other.

Step 3: **Clean Tools**

Clean all pruning tools with a solution of 1 part bleach to 9 parts water to prevent the spread of disease between plants.

Step 4: **Timing**

Prune plants at the correct time of year for the species. Some trees and shrubs should be pruned in late winter before new growth begins, while others should be pruned after they finish blooming.

Step 5: **Pruning Cuts**

Make clean cuts at a 45-degree angle, about 1/4 inch above a bud facing the outside of the plant. This encourages new growth to develop away from the center of the plant.

Step 6: **Branch Removal**

For larger branches, use the three-cut method to prevent bark tearing: (1) make a notch on the underside of the branch, (2) cut completely through the branch from the top a few inches away from the notch, and (3) cut the remaining stub just outside the branch collar.

Step 7: **Shaping**

Cut back to a lateral branch or bud to help shape the overall look of the plant. Ensure not to over-prune, as this can stress the plant and slow its growth.

Step 8: **Disposal**

Remove and dispose of all cuttings and debris to reduce the potential for pest or disease issues.

Step 9: **Aftercare**

Water the plant if necessary, and apply mulch around the base to conserve moisture and regulate soil temperature.

General Notes

Safety

Wear the appropriate safety gear, such as gloves and safety glasses, to protect yourself when pruning.

Avoid Over-pruning

Do not remove more than 25% of a plant's foliage in a single season, as this can drastically reduce its vigor and health.

Sterilization

Repeat the tool sterilization process between plants to minimize the risk of transmitting diseases.