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A lush garden scene featuring a wooden bench in the foreground, a large tree with thick branches on the left, and a dense green hedge. The background shows more trees and a bright sky. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

**Basic
Elements
of Pruning**

A Natural Approach with Master Gardener Nick Federoff

From the Author:



Whenever I begin talking about pruning I like to qualify where my expertise comes from. Normally I simply say, "What I lack on cutting on my face, I make up on bushes, trees, ground cover, lawns...", you get the picture.

Pruning is the art of manipulating plant growth. This could be good or bad depending on the overall look you are trying to achieve and how the plant responds to the cut. Plants respond to pruning like humans do to haircuts. If you get a bad haircut chances are you won't be very happy about it. If you get a good haircut you feel good about yourself and you respond better to the conditions around you. With pruning, if too much is taken off, the plant may not flower and fruit. If not enough is removed, the same may happen.

In this booklet, we focus on the overall discussion on how to make selective and specialty cuts. I like using roses and fruit trees as my targeted subjects because you can see their buds and wintertime branching much easier. It takes time, practice, and a trained eye to make the perfect cut. If you mess up, don't worry, most plants can be resilient and will bounce back in time so you can try again.

If you ever have any questions please feel free to contact me toll free 24/7 at 1-800-405-NICK (1-800-405-6425). Leave a message and we'll call you back when we are on-the-air.

Happy Pruning!

Nick

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Third Edition

When to Prune



The best time to prune depends on several variables - the condition of the plant, the length of its growing season, when it blooms, and whether its buds form on new growth or only on older wood. Let's take a closer look at pruning seasons and what could be done.

Spring pruning. Spring is the time to pinch off buds that may be starting branches or tops in the wrong places and to remove new suckers, water sprouts, or any other branches that are beginning to grow in the wrong direction.

Early summer pruning. This is the season when every plant is making its greatest growth. For this reason it's a good time to shear evergreens and hedges. It's also the best season for pruning shrubs that bloomed in the spring. Early summer is also the best time to continue corrective pruning on young trees, such as pinching or cutting off any limbs that might form extra tops, bad crotches, or suckers.

Late summer pruning. When all growth has stopped but the leaves have not yet fallen, it may be a good time to prune certain trees. Birches and maples that bleed so badly when pruned in late win-

ter and spring can be safely trimmed now, as can most other shade trees. This is a good time to do basal pruning on evergreens.

Fall pruning. Many prefer to do all their pruning just before winter sets in. When leaves finish falling off, you can see what you're doing; there's no sap running, and the weather is still pleasant. Normally, fall pruning is best for those that have the true four seasons of Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall.

Winter pruning. Depending on what part of the country you are from, Winter pruning is normally frowned upon. For the most part, it's normally wet and cold, not only for the plants, but, for the worker as well. Plant branches can freeze causing irreparable damage due to breakage.

Late-winter pruning. This is my favorite time of the year to do major pruning. Fruit trees are often pruned now, as are roses, broad-leaved evergreens, vines, and some flowering trees. As long as you are comfortable that Spring isn't here yet and you are clear of frost - it's time to prune.