

Tree Pruning Guide



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These are general guidelines for the best time to prune. While minor pruning can be done at any time, all major pruning should be done while the plant is still dormant after the coldest part of winter has passed.

Feel free to contact our garden center for more specific pruning information.

Trees - Deciduous

Common Name	Botanical Name	Time of Year
Birch	<i>Betula</i>	November - January
Black Gum	<i>Nyssa</i>	Late winter - if necessary
Crabapple	<i>Malus</i>	Late winter
Dogwood	<i>Cornus</i>	Winter - if necessary
Fringetree	<i>Chionanthus</i>	Early spring - if necessary
Honeylocust	<i>Gleditsia</i>	Late winter
Hornbeam	<i>Carpinus</i>	Late winter
Kentucky Coffeetree	<i>Gymnocladus</i>	Winter / Early spring
Lilac	<i>Syringa</i>	After blooming
Linden	<i>Tilia</i>	Late winter
Magnolia	<i>Magnolia</i>	After blooming
Maidenhair	<i>Ginkgo</i>	Winter
Maple	<i>Acer</i>	Late spring / Early summer
Oak	<i>Quercus</i>	December - February
Pears	<i>Pyrus</i>	Late winter
Plum / Cherries	<i>Prunus</i>	Late winter
Redbud	<i>Cercis</i>	Late winter / After blooming
Serviceberry	<i>Amelanchier</i>	Late winter / Early spring
Sweetgum	<i>Liquidambar</i>	Late winter
Tulip	<i>Liriodendron</i>	Late winter
Willow	<i>Salix</i>	Late winter
Zelkova	<i>Zelkova</i>	Late winter

Trees - Evergreen

Common Name	Botanical Name	Time of Year
Arborvitae	<i>Thuja</i>	Before new growth in spring or mid-summer
Hemlock	<i>Tsuga</i>	Late winter - Early spring / Mid-June
Holly	<i>Ilex</i>	Late winter
Juniper	<i>Juniperus</i>	Before new growth in spring or mid-summer
Pine	<i>Pinus</i>	Spring when candles appear.
Spruce	<i>Picea</i>	Before new growth in spring or mid-summer

Commonly Asked Questions:

When is 'Late Winter'? Late winter refers to February through late March/early April and typically refers to when the threat of severely cold weather has passed but while the tree is still dormant.

Why don't you prune a Maple in late winter? Some trees like Maple have free-flowing sap that may 'bleed' during a late winter or early spring pruning. Because you are pruning when the leaves have appeared, you never want to remove more than 1/4 of the foliage.

When should I prune my Hornbeam for a European style hedge? To keep a clean appearance you will want to prune in June/July. Hornbeam will often need 2 trimmings to stay in a neat hedge form.

Can I prune my Oak in summer? Pruning in the winter is recommended for Oak because of the reduced risk of oak wilt infection. Oak Wilt is a lethal fungal disease.

Why shouldn't I prune in fall? The cuts that are made on the tree in fall are slower to heal than in spring or even summer leaving the tree vulnerable to insect and disease. Late winter pruning, or pruning before the buds swell, leave the cuts open for the shortest amount of time and in an environment less likely for insect or disease.

Won't late winter pruning eliminate some spring blooms? Yes, and if you are only doing a light pruning on your spring blooming tree, you can prune immediately after blooming. Trees and shrubs that bloom in summer should always be pruned late winter or early spring.

What if I have a damaged tree or shrub? If necessary, minor pruning can be done at any time.

How much can I prune my Pine? Prune Pines in spring when the new growth appears. Cut back each candle 1/3 to 1/2 once the candle has expanded in the spring. Do not prune back into woody stems.

Should I prune my evergreens in spring or mid-summer? Choosing the right tree to fit your location is always the best option, but if pruning it is necessary you typically have two choices: Before the new growth appears in spring or during the semi-dormant period in mid-summer. The benefit of pruning before the new growth appears is so the new growth that emerges in the spring can cover the cut and you are left with a natural looking tree as opposed to hard edges.

Can I prune my holly in the late summer or fall? Holly are quite tolerant of pruning and could be pruned at any time. However, when pruned in the late summer they will quickly send out growth that may not harden off in time for winter. For this reason, pruning during the winter is often recommended.

