

PRUNING GUIDE

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 the winter has passed. Please contact our garden center for more specific pruning information.

Deciduous

Birch (*Betula*) – November to January
Black Gum (*Nyssa*) – Late winter if necessary
Crabapple (*Malus*) – Late winter
Dogwood (*Cornus*) – Winter if necessary
Fringetree (*Chionanthus*) – Early spring if necessary
Honeylocust (*Gleditsia*) – Late winter
Hornbeam (*Carpinus*) – Late winter
Kentucky Coffeetree (*Gymnocladus*) – Winter, early spring
Lilac (*Syringa*) – After blooming
Linden (*Tilia*) – Late winter
Magnolia (*Magnolia*) – After blooming
Maidenhair (*Ginkgo*) – Winter
Maple (*Acer*) – Late spring, early summer
Oak (*Quercus*) – December to February
Pears (*Pyrus*) – Late winter
Plum / Cherries (*Prunus*) – Late winter
Redbud (*Cercis*) – Late winter, after blooming
Serviceberry (*Amelanchier*) – Late winter, after blooming
Sweetgum (*Liquidambar*) – Late winter
Tulip (*Liriodendron*) – Late winter
Willow (*Salix*) – Late winter
Zelkova (*Zelkova*) – Late winter

Evergreen

Arborvitae (*Thuja*) – Before new growth in the spring or mid-summer
Hemlock (*Tsuga*) – Late winter, early spring, mid-June
Holly (*Ilex*) – Late winter
Juniper (*Juniperus*) – Before new growth in spring or mid-summer
Pine (*Pinus*) – Spring when candles appear
Spruce (*Picea*) – Before new growth in spring or mid-summer

PRUNING Q&A

When is “late winter”?

In the St. Louis area, late winter refers to February through late March/early April. This 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 Maples have free-flowing sap that may ‘bleed’ during late winter or early spring. Because you are pruning when the leaves have appeared, you never want to remove more than ¼ 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 or 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 the fall?

The cuts that are made on the tree in the fall are slower to heal than in spring or even summer. This can leave the tree vulnerable to insects 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 the 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?

Pine trees should be pruned in the spring when the new growth appears. Cut back each candle 1/3 to ½ 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.

- 1) Before the new growth appears in the spring.
- 2) During the semi-dormant period in the mid-summer.

The benefit of pruning before the new growth appears is so the new growth that emerges in the spring can cover the cuts and you are left with a natural appearance. Pruning after the plant has produced the new growth will give you a more formal appearance.

trees

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.



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