

Pruning Basics

Shape and renew plants with confident, correct cuts

DIFFICULTY Moderate

TYPE Ongoing seasonal practice

TIME Varies by plant and scale



DIFFICULTY
Moderate



TIME
Varies



COST
Low (tools)



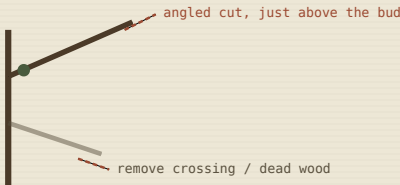
BEST SEASON
Mostly winter
(dormant), some
summer pruning



FREQUENCY
Annually per
plant

01 Cut just above a bud, at an angle

A clean, angled cut just above an outward-facing bud directs new growth outward and sheds water away from the cut — the same basic principle applies across most fruit trees, shrubs, and roses.



02 What you'll need

- Sharp, clean secateurs for small growth
- Loppers for thicker branches
- A pruning saw for anything loppers can't manage
- Rubbing alcohol or similar, for cleaning tools between plants if disease is a concern

04 Troubleshooting

- **Plant not fruiting after pruning** — some fruit trees fruit on last year's wood, others on new growth; pruning at the wrong time or removing the wrong wood can remove the coming season's fruit.
- **Excessive regrowth after a hard prune** — a common response to heavy pruning; expect and plan for a flush of vigorous growth that may need thinning again.
- **Disease spreading through cuts** — clean tools between plants, and avoid pruning susceptible species in wet weather when infection risk is higher.
- **Unsure where to cut** — when in doubt, make a smaller cut and reassess, rather than removing more than necessary in one go.

06 Tips & variations

PAIRS WELL WITH

Grafting Basics

COMMON MISTAKES

Pruning at the wrong time of year for that specific plant, removing the coming season's fruit

Making flat cuts instead of angled ones, which pool water and invite rot

PRO TIP

Research the specific pruning needs of each plant before cutting — timing and technique vary significantly between, say, roses, stone fruit, and pome fruit.

03 Method

1. Identify the goal first — shaping, renewal, disease/damage removal, or encouraging fruiting.
2. Remove dead, damaged, or diseased wood first, regardless of other goals.
3. Remove crossing or inward-growing branches to open up the centre for light and airflow.
4. Make angled cuts just above an outward-facing bud, sloping away from the bud so water runs off.
5. Step back periodically to assess the overall shape rather than making cut after cut without checking progress.

05 Timing & maintenance

BEST TIME	Most trees and shrubs: winter, while dormant. Stone fruit and some ornamentals: summer, to reduce disease entry risk.
DURATION	From minutes for a small shrub to a full day for a mature, neglected tree.
MAINTENANCE	Generally an annual task per plant, timed to that species' specific requirements.
SIGNS OF SUCCESS	An open, balanced shape with good light penetration, and strong new growth from the remaining buds the following season.