Proper Pruning Techniques for Healthy Plants
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Pruning is the removal of plant parts for a specific Purpose

Pruning encompasses a number of factors that effect long term health and structure:
- **Plants Age** (juvenile, mature or senescent)
- **Plants Condition** (poor, fair or good)
- **Plant Genus & Species** (conifer, deciduous or evergreen)
- **Plants growth form/habit and characteristics** (fruit, flower, trait)
- **Plants purpose in the landscape** (ornamental, shade, screening, food source)
- **Perspective of person conducting the pruning** (amateur or expert)
- **Timing of pruning** (actively growing, transitioning or dormant)

**Pruning must never be done without long term goals for the plants and your property in mind.** Identify what it is that you want to accomplish by using the checklist provided above, this will keep you from potentially damaging your plants.

**Pruning Principles:**
Pruning can be accomplished at any time throughout the year, with this said, specific plants and amounts to be pruned will vary; less than (1/4) or 25% during active growth, above (1/4) 25% during dormancy.

Flowering, does the plant form flower buds on old wood (mature stems) or new wood (current season’s growth) and when does it flower in the season. Prune plants that flower on new growth in late winter prior to new growth emerging. Prune plants that flower on previous season’s growth after flowering. Rejuvenation pruning of either type of plant can be accomplished during the dormant season with the understanding of sacrifice of some flowering for structure.

When thinning a branch you should allow one half (1/2) of the foliage too remain distributed on the lower two thirds (2/3) of the individual branches that make up the plants crown.

Sharp tools are a must for pruning; dull tools damage tissue and provide points of entry for diseases and insects.
Apical dominance is the use of the plants own growth regulator produced in the terminal bud to suppress lateral and dormant buds providing the terminal bud to grow faster than laterals. When pruning off a terminal bud, it is best to prune back to a larger lateral branch or bud that can assume apical dominance, this is done when redirection of growth is your goal. Remember pruning is an ongoing activity over the life of your plants.

Prune for structure as well as aesthetics, failure to do so may result in having neither in the life of your plant. Be judicious in you pruning decisions, timing and practices, learn from your past mistakes and improve your skills, practice makes perfect.

Limbs or canes of woody plants should be pruned at the branch collar, branches over 1 inch in diameter should be removed using the (3) three step method as shown in the diagram.

Pruning should be accomplished at the branch ends on the outer portion of the plants crown as well as within the interior of the crown. Thinning cuts will provide light and air to penetrate the crown limiting the low light and persistent wet conditions responsible for disease occurrence. Proper sanitation of tools and infected plant parts are a must in breaking the disease and insect cycle.