

# LICHTENBERG GARDENS

*Planting You in the Right Direction*

## Pruning 101: (The Basics)

### Reasons to Prune:

- To increase vigor. Regular pruning can keep a landscape young and healthy. Helps produce flowers more profusely and prevent disease and insect problems by removing weak or damaged branching. Pruning also allows the sun to penetrate more of the interior of the plant maximizing photosynthesis spreading growth throughout the entire plant.
- To preserve the scale and integrity of the landscape design. Keeping plants in their realm allowing for long term enjoyment of your plantings.
- To direct growth maintaining their desired size and shape. Also prune to remove any crossing branching and to create desired canopy of a tree (specially for the young ones to climb or swing on)
- To repair damage. Removing storm damage or damage from animals will help the plant heal and prevent disease and insect problems.
- To protect your investment: Mature trees on a property can significantly increase the value of that property, as much as 15%.

### The Right Tool for the Job: (Decided primarily by the size of the branch to be pruned)

- Tools include:
  - Bud Pruners: ideal for deadheading annuals and perennials
  - Hand-held Pruners (double cut blade): ideal for branches under ¾" diameter
  - Pruning Shears: ideal for creating formal shapes and hedges
  - Loppers: ideal for branches ¾" to 1½" diameter
  - Pruning Saws: ideal for branches larger than 1½" diameter

### When to Prune: (Depends on what you are pruning, be sure you know that)

- Spring Flowering Shrubs and Trees: Generally these are best to prune just after the flowers fade as their flower buds are set on the previous season's growth. Pruning these in the fall will cut off flower buds for the next season.
- Summer Flowering Shrubs: Summer blooming shrubs can be pruned in winter or early spring without removing flower buds as these buds emerge on new growth.
- Evergreen Shrubs: Can be pruned anytime, but is best to in spring before new growth begins. They can be pruned again, if necessary, after new growth has hardened off towards the end of June/early July. Then you should not have to touch them again until next spring.

- Ornamental Grasses: Easy. Cut back a few inches from the ground late winter/early spring. This will allow them to provide winter interest, be sure to cut down before the wind begins to blow the stalks around the neighborhood.
- Shade Trees: Generally these can be pruned anytime of the year. Pruning done at the initial planting time and continued the next few seasons determines the shape and strength of the branch structure. If planted with ample space to grow minimum pruning will be necessary. It is best not to prune oaks in summer as wilt can set in, and best not to prune maples in winter as sap production is high.
- Evergreen Trees: Pruning during the dormant season will restrict the growth of an evergreen; this can be good or bad. Pines can be pruned by cutting back a portion of its new growth (candle). This should be done before the candle growth hardens off in late spring. Spruces, hemlocks and firs can be pruned anytime from late summer, after new growth has hardened in the same manner as the pines. If planted with ample space to grow minimum pruning will be necessary.
- Perennials: deadhead and renew as needed (cut back ½ to renew, always remove cuttings as they can breed disease and fungus)
- Annuals: deadhead as needed

### Pruning Safety:

- If pruning from a ladder or in a tree be sure there are no electric lines present and dead branches that can give way. Have someone spotting and holding your ladder.
- Consider where a branch will fall when it is cut, be sure the area is clear and that the branch will not kick back into your ladder.
- When pruning deep in a shrub be sure you know where your non-cutting hand is as it is easy to snip your hand when you can't see it.
- Wear gloves, snug clothing and non-skid shoes.
- Use common sense, if you feel uncertain about your ability hire a professional.

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