

PRUNING EVERGREENS



Quick Facts...

- Most evergreens can be pruned any time of year without harm, except during subzero weather.
- Prune spruce and fir when buds are dormant.
- Prune pines when buds are in the "candle" stage.
- When possible, make pruning cuts so that lateral buds or branches cover the cuts.
- Pruning the top leader of spruce & fir makes them prone to storm damage and destroys natural shape.
- Plantings of vigorously growing evergreens require frequent pruning for control.

Pruning Guidelines

Broad leaf evergreens should be pruned very little, if at all. If pruning is necessary, prune lightly just after blooming. Occasional corrective pruning to remove unwanted shoots may be done almost any time, providing the cut is made just above a side branch.

For narrow-leaf needle trees or shrubs, such as pines, spruce and fir, prune according to growth characteristics. Prune those that produce side buds on the shoots, such as spruce, fir and Douglas-fir, by cutting the tips back to the desired length in late winter or early spring when buds are dormant. Cut just above a side bud or side branch (see Figure 1).

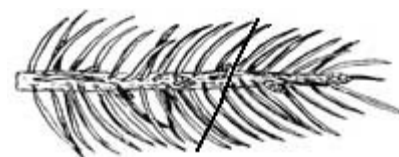


Fig. 1: Prune just above a side bud.

In plants which produce few side buds, such as pines, pruning may be accomplished by snapping off with the fingers a portion of the young growth "candles" that form in late spring and early summer. The proper time to prune is when the candles snap off easily and cleanly (see Figure 2).

Plants with scale-like leaves and no definite buds, such as junipers and arborvitae, may be pruned at anytime except during sub-zero weather. The optimum time for using hedge shears to prune an upright evergreen is just prior to the new growth in spring and again in late June or early July. Cutting marks will be covered up by the flush of growth. *Do not use hedge shears on spreading evergreens.* To obtain a natural look on this type of plant, prune to an upward growing branch or bud. Careful pruning will allow the remaining lateral branch to hide the cut (see Figure 3).



Fig. 2: Remove part of the 'candle.'

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Pruning Practices to Avoid

Avoid pruning the top leader in evergreens such as spruce or fir. Cutting into the woody portion of such growth often results in a multiple top and ultimately destroys the natural shape. Multiple-topped evergreens are more prone to storm damage.

Frequent shearing of upright evergreens is not recommended except to obtain a formal effect. Frequent shearing encourages dense growth on the perimeters of the plant. This growth shades out the growth on the inside.

When a branch on such a plant is damaged by a storm, a large and obvious gap results. Repair of such damage is often slow and difficult.

Do not plant vigorously growing evergreens close to the foundations of a house, in front of a low picture window or anywhere where frequent pruning is necessary for control. Pruning to correct size in this instance is only a temporary and unsatisfactory method of control.

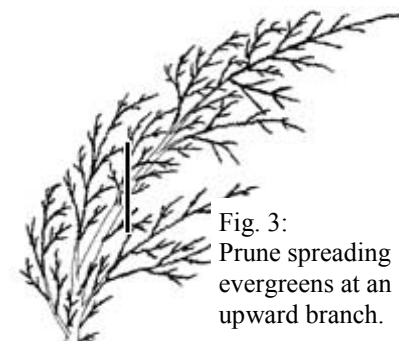


Fig. 3: Prune spreading evergreens at an upward branch.