

## PRUNING

### REASONS TO PRUNE:

1. TO MAINTAIN THE HEALTH OF YOUR PLANT - Plant material will be healthier and more attractive if you remove branches that are diseased, dead, or growing into one another. Plants that have become too densely branched should be thinned to allow air and sunlight to reach their inner leaves and stems, helping to discourage some diseases.
2. TO DIRECT GROWTH – By making a pruning cut, you stop growth in one direction and encourage it in another , since growth continues in the buds and branches left behind.
3. TO REMOVE UNDESIRABLE GROWTH – Prune out wayward branches and remove suckers (stems growing up from roots) and water sprouts (upright shoots growing from the trunk and branches). It should not, however be necessary to cut back a plant continually to keep it in bounds. If it requires such treatment, it was probably a poor choice for its location and should be replaced with a plant that will naturally remain smaller.
4. TO INCREASE QUALITY OR YIELD OF FLOWERS OR FRUIT – Most fruit trees and many flowering trees and shrubs need regular pruning to produce a good annual crop of fruit or blossoms. Please ask a sales assistant for specifics on pruning these types of plants.
5. TO MAINTAIN SAFETY – It is important to remove split or broken branches that threaten to fall. Also prune any branches that obscure views.
6. TO CREATE HEDGES OR TOPIARY – Many varieties of plants are suitable for specialty gardening.

## PRUNING AND PLANT GROWTH

Because many kinds of pruning cuts are made near a growth bud, it is essential to understand the different types of growth buds, in order to help you decide where to make the cuts.

1. **TERMINAL BUD** – Grows at the tip of a shoot, causing that shoot to grow longer. Actively growing terminal buds produce hormones that move down the stem and inhibit the growth of other buds on that stem.
2. **LATERAL BUD** - Grows along the sides of the shoot a leaf attachment points (nodes); they produce the sideways growth that makes a plant bushy. These buds stay dormant until the shoot has grown long enough to diminish the influence of the hormones produced by the terminal bud, or until the terminal bud is pruned off; then they begin to grow.
3. **LATENT BUD** – Lies dormant beneath the bark. If a branch breaks or is cut off near a latent bud, that bud may develop into a new shoot.

Four types of Pruning cuts:

1. **Thinning** – Many of the cuts made when pruning are thinning cuts. Such cuts can direct growth, eliminate competing or old stems, reduce overall size, and open up a plant's structure.
  - a. To thin, you remove an entire branch or stem, taking it back to its point of origin or to its junction with another branch. You might cut a branch back to the trunk, to the parent branch from which it arose, or all the way to the ground. When removing one branch at a branch junction, be sure the remaining branch is at least  $\frac{1}{3}$  the diameter of the one being removed. If it is any smaller than that, it will be unable to assume the terminal role, and the effect will be more like that resulting from a heading cut.
2. **Heading** – Heading cuts remove just part of a stem or branch – not the whole thing, as thinning cuts do. Such cuts can be made back to a bud or to a twig or branch too small to take over the terminal role (less than  $\frac{1}{3}$  the diameter of

the branch you're removing). Heading stimulates the growth of lateral buds just below the cut. ( Shearing and pinching, are also forms of heading).

3. Shearing – An indiscriminate form of heading, shearing does not involve careful precise cutting just above a growing point. Instead, you clip a plant's outer foliage to create an even surface, as in hedges or topiary. However, because the plants best suited to shearing have main and lateral branches bearing closely spaced buds, almost every cut ends up near a growing point.
4. Pinching – This is the simplest of pruning cuts. Using your thumb and forefinger or a pair of hand shears, you nip off the tips of new growth, removing the terminal bud. This stops the shoot from growing longer and stimulates branching. Pinching is used primarily on annuals and perennials to make them bushy and encourage the production of more flowers.