



PRUNING EVERGREEN SHRUBS

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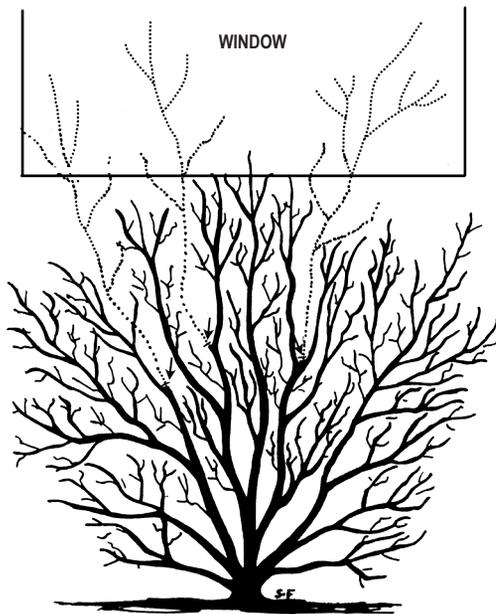


Figure 1. Dotted lines indicate branches growing above windowsill. Arrows point at the areas where cuts were made.

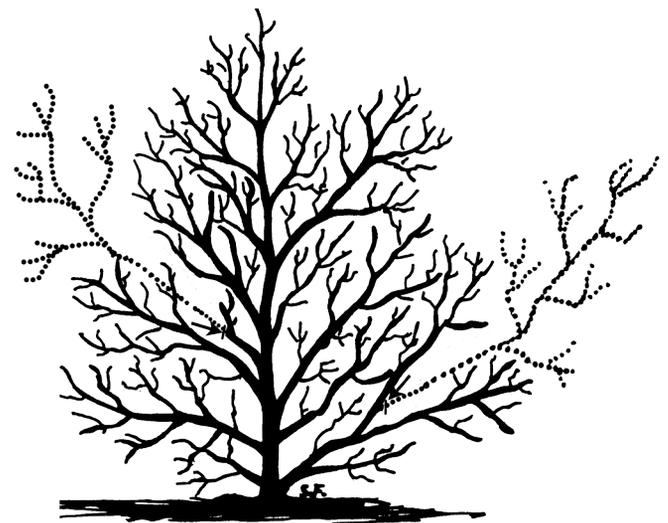


Figure 2. Side branches on evergreen shrubs can be shortened as indicated in the above illustration. Arrows point to pruning cuts.

Evergreen shrubs used to landscape the home grounds should be permitted to grow and develop into their natural shapes. Natural growing shrubs lend a pleasing look to the home grounds. This does not mean that we cannot prune to keep them within limited bounds, but we should definitely not prune to formal shapes such as globes, squares or pyramids. If they are pruned in this manner, they must be constantly sheared to maintain these shapes.

Select The Right Plant For The Location

Pruning should not be used as a means of correcting growth habits of plants which are not suitable for a given location. Tall growing shrubs under windows cannot be kept at a low profile for an extended period of time. Severe pruning will eventually destroy the beauty of the plant or cause serious physiological disorders. Make sure you know the growth habit of plants before planting.

When to Prune Evergreen Shrubs

When an evergreen plant has reached the desired height and width, gardeners should prune back any limb which is growing beyond the desired limits. Delaying pruning and allowing

numerous branches to grow above the intended limits and pruning all of these at one time is not recommended. Prune when branches grow above the intended guidelines. Removal of numerous branches at one time will often leave noticeable gaps; sunburning may result.

How to Prune Evergreen Shrubs

One point to keep in mind when pruning evergreen shrubs is to prune to maintain natural shape. To keep plants within the confines of limited space, prune whenever the branches grow about 1 foot beyond the intended guidelines. This can generally be done at anytime of the year. An example follows: Let us assume you have a slow growing shrub under a windowsill which is approximately 4 feet from ground level. Any branch which grows 1 foot beyond the sill should be removed. Reach into the center of the shrub and cut off the offending branch. The cut should be made at a lateral branch. Each time a branch grows above the intended area, remove it. The area where the cut was made will produce new growth to replace those being removed through pruning. The width of plants can be reduced by this same procedure. (Fig. 1 & 2)

Maintaining Vigor of Evergreen Shrubs

Gardeners often overlook the necessity for maintaining shrubs in a vigorous growing condition. Vigor is needed to stimulate new growth to replace branches which were removed during pruning. Lack of vigor oftentimes results in loss of leaves near the base of the plant and exposes the base branches.

Most evergreen shrubs respond to application of ammonium phosphate, 16-20-0. An application made just prior to the spring flush growth and repeated applications whenever the foliage color tends to lighten from dark green to light green.

CAUTION: Mineral fertilizers are highly concentrated and can cause burning if applied too heavily. It is better to apply too little than to cause damage by over-fertilizing. For most established shrubs, apply about " 1/4 to 1/2 cup of 16-20-0 in the water basin or spread it around the shrub drip line if no water basin is used. Distribute the fertilizer evenly. Water thoroughly after applying.

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