



# TREES & SHRUBS

## Pruning Evergreens

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### 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 and fir makes them prone to storm damage and destroys natural shape.

Plantings of vigorously growing evergreens require frequent pruning for control.

Many types of evergreen shrubs and trees need little or no pruning to keep them in prime condition. Some of the more vigorously growing evergreens, however, such as the Pfitzer juniper, may require moderate, periodic pruning.

Frequent pruning may be necessary to keep faster growing plants in bounds and to prevent them from interfering with a walk, driveway or view from a picture window. Consider replacing such plants with a slower growing type or one of a different growing habit.

### Pruning Guidelines

Broad leaf types, such as the Oregon grape holly, should be pruned little, if at all. If pruning is necessary, prune lightly just after bloom (late spring). 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).

In plants which produce few side buds, such as pines, pruning may be accomplished by pinching or 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).

Avoid cutting these plants with a knife or shears. This invariably injures some of the needles and later gives the plant a general brown appearance.

Plants with scale-like leaves and no definite buds, such as junipers and arbor vitae, 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 like the Pfitzer juniper. 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 pruning cut (see Figure 3).

### 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 also are more prone to storm damage from the weight of heavy snows.

Frequent light shearing of upright evergreens like junipers 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 like the Pfitzer juniper 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.

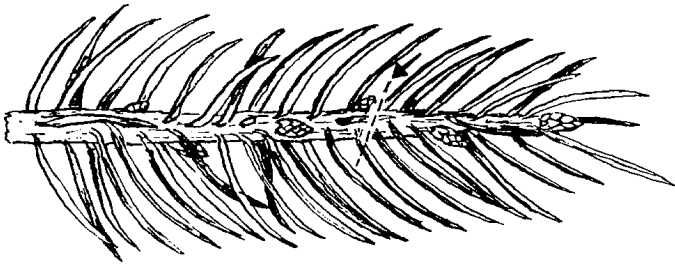


Figure 1: Pruning cut just above a side bud.

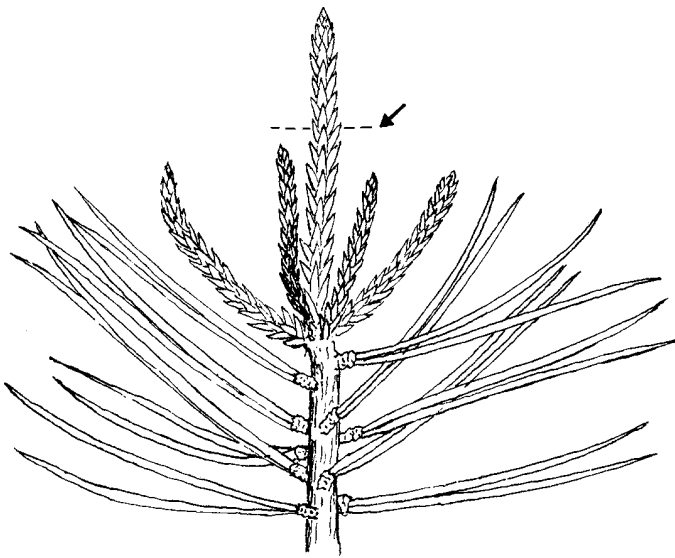


Figure 2: Pinch off a portion of the "candle."

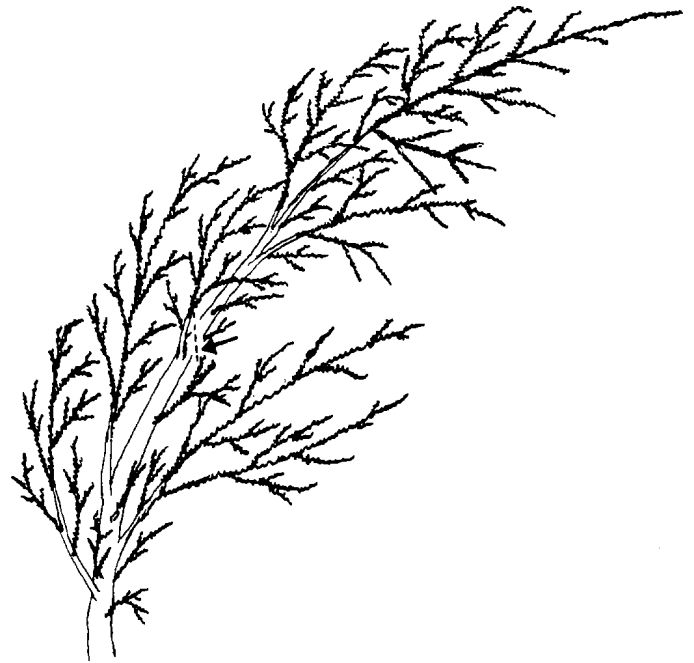


Figure 3: Prune spreading evergreens at an upward branch.