

Proper Plant Pruning

By: Melinda Sperl

One of the most important things to know about pruning trees and shrubs is the angle of the cut. For trees, it is important to cut the branch after the collar which is about ¼" out of the limb and is actually the part of the tree that curls around the wound to heal the cut. If the angle of the cut is upward the wound can create a "cup" on the branch encouraging disease and pests to the area. Remember that unless there is a problem branch, trimming of trees should only be done every 5-10 years.

For shrubs it is a similar procedure by cutting with a downward angle, especially on roses. Prune out any inside and crossing branches to give the plant air and room to grow. For plants that have die-back to the ground like Salvia and Hibiscus, cut the branches until you find deadwood which really may be everything to the ground. Do not pull the plant out until you are sure it is dead as you just may throw out a good plant. Because of the cooler nights that we are still having, there are a lot of plants that are still dormant so give them time to come back.

The One Third Rule is always a good rule to follow. Never cut more than a third of the plant or tree at a time. If you need to cut more off, let the plant rest for at least a month and then repeat. This is good for all except roses, they can take a good trimming in the spring.

Happy Gardening!

Melinda Sperl is a Horticulturalist and the owner of Dream Landscape Design, Inc. You can reach Melinda at Melinda@dreamlandscapedesign.com or www.dreamlandscapedesign.com