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# Missoula County

## Integrated Plant Management

### Fact Sheet # 7

### Is it Time to Prune?

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Shade trees, fruit trees, and all types of shrubs, including fruit producing raspberries, require pruning. Pruning maximizes growth, health, flower, and fruit production. Pruning at the right time is the key and varies depending on the plant. Shrub pruning has been divided into two groups and tree pruning is varied by type. The following discussion will hopefully help you with your pruning questions

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#### Shrubs

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##### Group 1

These shrubs need to be pruned after flowering. It is at that time that they have a chance to grow the branches that will flower the following year. These shrubs are:

Barberry (Berberis)  
Forsythia  
Honeysuckle (Lonicera)  
Lilac (Syringa)  
Mock Orange (Philadelphus)  
Ninebark (Physocarpus)  
Spiraea (spring-blooming varieties)

##### Group 2

Prune these shrubs after buds have begun to swell but before buds turn green in the spring:

American elder, elderberries (Sambucus)	Rabbit brush (Chrysothamnus)
Buckthorn (Rhamnus)	Raspberries, flowering & fruiting
Bush honeysuckle (Diervilla sessilifolia)	(Rubus species)
Caragana	Sagebrush, Southernwood,
Cotoneaster	Wormwood (Artemisia)
Currants and Gooseberry (Ribes)	Serviceberry
Dogwoods (Red twig)	Spiraea (all species that bloom in summer)
Euonymus (Spreading euonymus)	Viburnum
Hydrangea	
Leadplant	
Ocean spray (Holodiscus)	
Nanking cherry, Sand cherry,	
Flowering Almond, Rose Tree of	
China (Prunus species)	

## **Shade Trees**

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Prune shade trees during dormancy (winter through early spring) because it's the best time to see and to correct potential structure problems. Pruning shade trees during leaf emergence, or in the fall before leaf drop is complete, is the worst time to prune.

Some shade tree species, such as birch and maple, secrete sap when pruned during their peak growth periods (spring), or during a warm weather period in the winter. This is normal and not a problem; but, to avoid secretion ("bleeding"), wait until the tree leafs out and its peak growth has slowed before undertaking major pruning.

## **Fruit Trees**

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Prune out fire blight infected or borer infested branches any time you notice them. Prune fire blight wood 8 to 12 inches below the area on the branch that is dead or shriveled. Sterilize pruning equipment between cuts. Major pruning should be done during the delayed dormant period (late winter to early spring) . . . just as buds begin to swell.

## **Fruiting Shrubs**

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### **Raspberries**

These fruiting shrubs come in two types;

1. First-year fruiting canes; and,
2. Second-year fruiting canes.

To prune FIRST-YEAR fruiting canes, cut canes close to the ground in late winter or early spring. New canes will grow and produce fruit in late summer.

To prune SECOND-YEAR fruiting canes, cut canes close to the ground in late winter or early spring. New canes will grow and produce fruit in late summer.

§ For tender cultivars and non-diseased canes, prune old fruiting canes in late winter or early spring.

§ Head back remaining vigorous canes (the ones that have grown too tall) in late winter to early spring.

## Evergreen Shrubs and Trees

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Prune dead or diseased branches as they appear. Thin bottom branches to lift them off the ground and to shape them after the coldest winter weather is past but before the warmer weather (>50EF.) sends the plants their "wake up" message.

### TIPS:

- Larch trees lose their needles in the fall and will grow new ones in the spring.
- Tip back new shoots on Mugo pines yearly to prevent leggy appearance.
- Thin out branches of Colorado Blue Spruce to decrease wind damage potential.
- Shape junipers, cedars, and arborvitae by removing tips from sides and top of the shrub during late winter through late spring. Make these "thinning cuts" just above outward-growing buds or branches. Thin top branches to prevent shading of lower limbs.

### NOTE:

Shorter, tighter forms may be less susceptible to winter injury.