



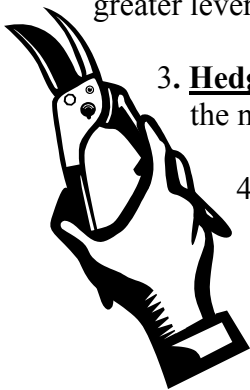
Pruning Tools of the Trade



Backyard gardeners of all experience levels need a quality pruning tool. Whether the application be cut flowers, deciduous fruit trees, roses, shrubs, or ornamentals, pruning tools are a must. The purpose of this handout is to aid you in making the right decisions.

Your job to choose the right tool begins with understanding the application. For example, long handled loppers wouldn't be best to trim a rose bush. Nor should you use pruning shears on a large branch on a 40 ft. ornamental tree. There are many tools available but what you really need is a basic assortment that will do the proper pruning in most yards. There are four essential tools for success:

1. **Pruning Shears:** With this one-handed, scissor-like tool you can harvest and prune grapes, snip flowers, clip twigs, thin shrubs and cut live or dead wood up to ½" in diameter.
2. **Loppers:** This long handled tool is designed to cut heavy vines and small branches and to prune in awkward places where a long reach is needed. The powerful cutting jaws and greater leverage enable you to cut through 1 ½ to 2 inch diameter live or dead wood.
3. **Hedge Shears:** This single purpose tool is designed for trimming and shaping the new growth of hedge shrubs.
4. **Pruning Saw:** Built with the style of a hacksaw or butchers saw, a lightweight pruning saw can handle any kind of wood up to 3 ½ in diameter. The blades have a pattern of four cutting teeth alternating with pairs of raker teeth that clean sawdust out of the cut and are replaceable. The saw is fast because it cuts in both directions.



As with any tool, you should buy the finest you can afford. Durable, high performance pieces will resist the ravages of weather, rust, dirt, and often, neglect, and give you years of service. In the case of cutting tools, the utility and durability will depend significantly on the quality of its steel: always look for superior drop-forged, heat treated steel.

It is also essential that your tools fit your hands, height, and strength: pruning shears, loppers, hedge shears, and saws are made in different sizes with handles and grips of varying design and dimension. The tool should feel well balanced; it should not weigh too much or be longer than you can manage efficiently; and the handle should fit your grip comfortably.

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