

Pruning Schedule for Most Deciduous Trees

Edmund Taylor 10-21-96 at SMGC

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
BEST TIME	XXX	XXX	X								X	XXX

Pruning at these times promotes vigorous Spring growth

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
						XXX	XXX					

Pruning at these times will result in slow growth

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
WORST TIME			X	XXX	XXX							

Plants at these times have lowest amount of stored food reserves...

Pruning may damage plant

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	NOV
								XXX	XXX	XXX	XX	

Plants at these times are storing carbohydrates in the limbs and trunks....

It is just like charging a car battery...Avoid pruning, if possible

PRUNING TIPS and SCHEDULE

by Henry Pittman

Unless it is an emergency (sparks flying from grounding out your overhead power line, pushing up the eaves of your house, blocking your emergency exit, etc.), hold off a number of weeks before doing very much pruning of your deciduous trees and other plants.

The accompanying chart is based on a lecture by former Extension Agent Edmund Taylor to the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club in 1996 and is invaluable in planning pruning times for the best results.

Right now--fall--is the second worst time to remove significant amounts of growth. This is the time when carbohydrate-containing sap (sugars) is beginning to move down into the roots for winter storage. It is the time of "battery charging"--the time of storing energy in the proper part of the plant for survival during the long hard winter, and for use the following spring for good, healthy new growth. Cutting away parts of the plant between August and early November wastes valuable energy which should be stored. Pruning during that period--before leaf drop--probably won't actually harm the plant, but it does reduce its strength and potential for new growth later.

So, unless there are overriding reasons to prune now, please wait another few weeks--for complete leaf drop.

The very best time for major or severe pruning of most deciduous plants is during the dormant season--late November until early March. Pruning during that period is quite safe and will result in vigorous new growth in the spring. And it is also the best time to view the structure of the plant for optimum shaping, removal of damaged branches and, perhaps, controlling the size of the plant. But be very careful and considerate

in trying to control size significantly--this should be done primarily by proper selection of varieties which naturally have the desired growth habits.

But more about this, and particularly about the bad, bad pruning that is often thrust upon our wonderful small crape myrtle trees. In the next newsletter, we will discuss specific procedures, techniques and tips for pruning, but for now, let's talk just about good pruning schedules.

The very worst time to prune is in the early spring when the plant is having its first "blush of growth". This is the time when plants have their lowest reserve of stored food; actual damage might be done to the plant if pruning is very severe during this period. So, be particularly aware of minimizing pruning from late March until the end of May.

Mid-summer (June and July) is a good pruning period, particularly if you want re-growth to be slow, and less vigorous than that which occurs after dormant-season pruning.

It will be helpful to keep the shape of this chart in mind when you are considering pruning. But more important, just remember the logic of protecting the carbohydrates--don't prune while this potential energy is moving down for winter storage, and don't prune when the supply is at its very lowest after the long inactive winter with no leaves for photosynthesis to replace energy.

Pruning is somewhat of an art and good pruning techniques can make one really feel like an artist. So, until next newsletter....