

PRUNING TOOLS

Good pruning equipment can make training fruit plants, shaping hedges, and pruning roses and other plants a relatively painless experience. Here are a few tools that the average home gardener will need. Regardless of the tools you buy, selecting drop-forged, hand treated steel or titanium will ensure the longest durability.

Pruning shears are small, one handed tools that are useful for pruning twigs up to 3/4 inch in diameter. They are available in anvil form, where the sharp upper blade meets the center of an unmoving surface – the “anvil”. These are generally used for dead wood and should be avoided for pruning live plants since it works by crushing the stem. Bypass or scissor-like pruning shears consist of 2 sharp blades sliding past each other and are preferred for most small pruning.

Loppers are similar to pruning shears, but their long handles provide greater leverage needed to cut branches up to 1 1/2” in diameter. Hollow shafts, padded grips and a bumper guard near the head all help reduce the pruning impact on the gardener’s body. Loppers can cut through 1 1/2-inch branches and most have the action of bypass shears. The better models have titanium jaws that take and hold a sharp edge longer than steel.

Hedge shears are designed for one purpose - to trim and shape several twigs at a time, creating a uniform even appearance. They are commonly used to trim foundation evergreens. They come in manual models, operated with both hands, and electric and gas- powered models.

If you are pruning limbs over 1 inch in diameter, then a pruning saw is another very useful tool to have. These saws generally feature a design whereby the blade folds into the handle. These saws have teeth that both cut and simultaneously remove sawdust. Some pruning saws cut in both directions, while others cut only when the saw is pulled toward the user. Those that only cut when pulled towards the user are sometimes known as Japanese pull saws.

A pole pruner consists of a pruning saw and pruning shear located at the end of a long pole. Most pole pruners usually feature a telescoping pole. This enables the user to reach higher branches. The shears are operated by a pull cord. The poles are available in fiberglass and composite materials. Caution is urged when using these tools near power lines, including those leading to a home or other structure.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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