

Pruning

03/09/2002

Pruning is a necessary element of landscaping and here in the Arizona desert, it is critical that pruning take place over the next few weeks. Pruning is one of the most confusing and difficult tasks to teach and do here in the Southwest. It could be considered more of an art than a science.

One of the simplest types of plants to prune is a rose bush. Rose bushes demand severe pruning this time of year. There are a couple of things to remember:

- Try to prune no more than one-third to one-half of the plants structure.
- Prune the plant into a vase shape. The middle needs to be open to allow air circulation.
- Prune off any dead, dying or diseased growth.
- All pruning cuts need to be sealed with lipstick, Elmers glue or plant seal.
- Make sure all cuts are at a 45-degree angle above an outward facing bud node.
- Clean up all of your leaf litter from the live plant, because these will harbor pests.

Grapes are one of my favorite plants to grow here in the desert. I normally use them to shade my garden during the summer and because they are dormant during the winter, the vines allow for light to warm my garden during the winter. The biggest confusion about grapes is how to prune them. Normally, if you are trying to optimize production, you need to prune them in certain ways. Types of pruning include:

- Thompson seedless needs cane pruning.
- Perlette needs spur pruning.
- Flames needs spur pruning.

Cane pruning is basically removing everything but two to three canes along a central leader.

Spur pruning is removing all of the growth except eight-20 small spurs along a central leader. Your best bet is to sign up for a class or learn from a neighbor.

With trees, make sure to thin out any dead or dying wood and prune out any cross branches or any branches that don't create a 45-degree angle from the trunk of the tree.

A couple of rules for pruning include:

- Use the correct tools.

- Never prune more than one-third of the plant or tree.
- A plant or tree usually prunes opposite of its flowering cycle.
- Never prune below the collar of the main trunk. If you are not sure, get advice.