

## Gardening Article

Our winter gardens are beginning to awaken as spring approaches. With spring nearing, there are several gardening chores we need to tend too. One primary chore that lacks attention is pruning. February is the month to shape evergreens and form central leaders on trees. Though several plants are pruned this month, it is not time to prune all plants. One rule of thumb is to prune after the plant's landscape feature has passed. For spring flowering plants, prune in late spring as the flowering season is ending to allow for adequate growth during the summer to produce flower buds for the next year. For fall-flowering plants, like some camellias, use tip pruning or the thinning method (for more info. on pruning methods visit us on the web). For plants with colorful berries, prune after the berries are gone. For plants that produce flowers on one-year-old wood (usually those that bloom after June) cut away only those branches with spent flowers or prune using the thinning method in late winter to promote vigorous spring growth.

There are several pruning techniques used to meet the plants and/or owner's needs. However, one inappropriate but commonly practiced method of pruning is tree topping. Topping creates starvation upsetting the root-to-crown ratio, shock causing sunscald to the internal bark, large wounds opening the tree to pests and diseases, weak limbs, rapid new growth, tree death, and unsightliness. Finally, the cost of topping trees may look less up front because good decisions about pruning are not needed. However, there are several hidden costs in topping trees, like trees that die will need replacement, the ugly trees may reduce property value, the dead stubs become liabilities, and more long-term maintenance will be needed.

For more gardening information go to [www.crownslandscaping.com](http://www.crownslandscaping.com)