

Home & Garden

Little at Large

PRUNING is an essential part of general garden maintenance but often it has an aura of mystery for many gardeners, fuelled by fear and ignorance. Fear because, once the cut is made there is no going back.

And ignorance because it's important to understand the reasons for pruning and the fact that different plants have different needs at different times of the year. That's why it fills me with sadness to see that the tendency, nowadays, is to hack everything back with a hedgetrimmer regardless.

There are several reasons why pruning is essential. Firstly for health. You should check your plants regularly and remove dead, diseased, weak, ingrowing and rubbing branches, which can be a source or cause of infection. Cut them back to a healthy shoot or new buds. Plants can also outgrow their allotted space, so regular pruning will keep them under control.

You prune to influence shape, particularly in the case of hedges and topiary, where it is necessary to maintain the required outline.

Pruning is important to encourage flowers. To know when to prune is vital, as flowers are produced on stems of a particular age, either on the previous or current season's



**Garden talk, by
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growth and some on older wood.

Also older stems lose their colour, so regular pruning is necessary to produce brightly-coloured wood. Young stems of dogwood and salix look spectacular this time of year.

Pruning is needed to remove reversion and suckers. Variegated plants are inclined to revert, producing vigorous plain green shoots. These should be removed before they take over. Also suckers should be cut out at the base as soon as they appear.

**Happy gardening
Martin Little**