

Pruning

With Jim Turner at the Cenotaph on October 19, 2010

Timing for pruning

It's best to prune over a three year (continuing) plan. It is a gradual, ongoing process. Buds are dormant and slow to start (especially in evergreens). You can't expect immediate results.

Late winter and spring are the best times for pruning, but much can be done in the fall. It is a less busy time in the garden. You should prune when you have the opportunity.

In the fall wounds are slower to heal and there is more fungus around, and in the garden.



Some garden club members hard at work

Focus plants

Norway spruce

The Norway spruce is a beautifully shaped tree with draping branches. The overall shape should be maintained. First remove deadwood which harbours fungus, insects and disease. Branches may be shortened without changing the overall shape of them or the tree. Prune where you would like the plant to grow. Sometimes you must make a trade-off between the shape and the desired outcome – sacrifice a branch to make room for the mower....

Remember to think of the plant and how it obtains nutrients and moisture. When pruning back you need to leave enough leaf (needles) material to draw moisture and nutrients up through the shrub/tree and branch to sustain the branch and allow new growth. In evergreens or any plant, branches will die if they don't have a sufficient supply of nutrients and moisture.

Ninebark

It is best not to prune more than 1/3 of a shrub at one time each year. This is a very forgiving native shrub so you can prune it any way you want. Take out the long straight branches. Attempt to maintain the natural curving vase-like growth pattern. Always start with the bigger things first then move to the smaller. Go for the overall shape you are looking for – 6-7 feet arching mound is nice for a ninebark. Foliage is the highlight for this one, not so much the flowers.

When making a cut, leave ½ -1 cm beyond where you want the branch to end and cut at an angle so that there is less dead wood forming at the cut site and the branch will stay healthy to the tip.

There are two types of pruning cuts:

1. **Thinning cut** – To remove the branch, thin out, and open up the shrub. The diameter of the branch left above a cut should be no less than half the diameter of the remaining lower branch so enough nutrients and moisture to be drawn up and keep that remaining branch alive.
2. **Heading cut** –Encourages new growth. Cut at the end of the branch at the tips.

Cedar

Needles on this tree are short lived (a couple of years). Therefore bare branches are common. To encourage growth, do heading cuts at the apex (June is best when new growth is forming). Just cut the tips of green growth. Growth is very slow and occurs where the plant is open to light. When cutting large branches or part of the trunk of the tree, cut at an angle to prevent pooling of water on a flat top where moisture will cause the tree to rot. Do this in the spring. Fortunately cedars are rot resistant. Maples are susceptible to rot. Paint is not recommended as fungi can grow beneath the paint layer. Best to leave it open to heal naturally.

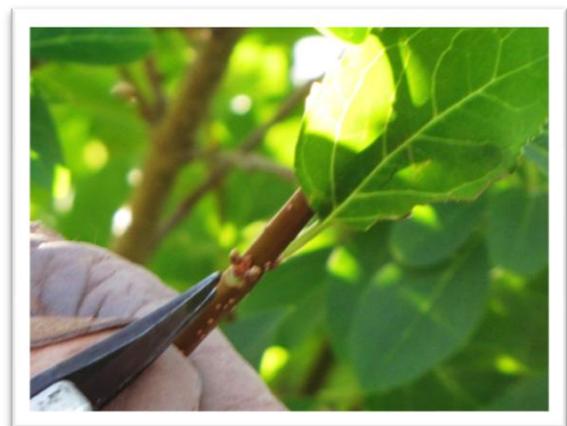
When removing small dead stick wood off the branches, leave 1 cm on these as they may hold dormant buds which will grow eventually.

Elderberry

These shrubs are tolerant to moderate or heavy pruning. Remove the dead wood and branches that look unsightly and that don't add anything appealing to the appearance of the shrub.

Forsythia

Pruning in the fall will rob the shrub of flowers in the spring. Forsythias are vase shaped naturally, and about 7 ft. is ideal height. When shortening the shrub, vary the cuts: take 2 ft. off some and the tips off others to give it a natural look. Remove any rat's nests (clumps and bushy sections). Branches that have compound buds with 2, 3, and 4 buds have leaf and flower buds (photo at right). They can be avoided if you do not wish to affect the flowering of the shrub.



Azaleas

These have lost their leaves. Reshape some of these shrubs in June (after they flower is the best time). Trim back to encourage growth and thicken them up. Mulching is good to retain some moisture in the soil.

Rhododendrons

The one in the Cenotaph looks good. Nice shape. Dead heading is not necessary as most are hybrids and do not form viable seed. Flowering does not seem to be influenced by dead heading.

Rhodos respond well to pruning. Cut back to the top of the axils. Don't prune them in the fall.

PJM is an evergreen rhododendron.

Daylilies

Brown leaf tips are caused by fungal disease. After the leaves die back in the fall, then you should remove the leaf litter.

Hosta

Hostas can be cleared up after they die back also.

Potentilla

In the spring when new growth starts you may cut way back to about 6". Flowers form on new growth. We should move the one at the Cenotaph to a full sun location in the spring (it is being overgrown by another shrub).

Maple Tree

There is a large wound on the trunk of our tree facing the south west direction. The wound is healing well but should be protected from winter sun which will cause drying and suffer from dramatic

temperature changes on sunny days in January. Cathy will provide some burlap protection for shade which should be removed in the spring.



Jim considering the pruning plan

The Plan

Ninebark shrubs are forming a nice backdrop for the larger cenotaph garden bed. We will concentrate more on the front aspect and allow the shrubs to fill in along the back. We will trim around the feature trees to allow good air circulation and light to get to these plants. There are

natural pockets in the back of the garden that we can maintain some perennials such as daylilies. Some of the perennials can be removed in the spring for the sale: some ninebark pieces, Potentilla, lady's mantle, etc.

Comments

Several of our keen-eyed gardeners had sightings of an unknown Painted butterfly, a honey bee, and a bumble bee. Also there were forsythia, poppies, ajuga, and daylilies flowering.

We all benefitted from this time spent with Jim on pruning. Thank you all for coming and helping to make the gardens look so nice.



Notes by Cathy Connolly
for Eastern Shore Garden Club
Nova Scotia Association of Garden Clubs
October 19, 2010
the Cenotaph in Porter's Lake