



# Pruning Ornamental Trees and Shrubs Leader's Guide

*Kate Dobbs and Diane Relf\**

Congratulations for volunteering to lead young people in learning about pruning ornamental trees and shrubs. Remember, you aren't expected to be an expert in this area — you will learn along with your 4-H group. Your enthusiasm toward this project will promote the interest and perseverance an effort like this needs.

As project leader, you will guide your 4-H'ers to help them gain knowledge and skills in pruning ornamental trees and shrubs. At the same time, you will help them build self-confidence, learn to help others, gain career knowledge, learn responsibility, and care for the environment.

## THE LEADER'S ROLE

- Become familiar with the member's guide and adapt it to the needs of your group. For example, several 4-H'ers may need to work together on a study project if each person is unable to prune his or her own trees or shrubs.
- Communicate with the parents of the participants concerning the objectives and solicit their support.
- Supply additional information on pruning trees and shrubs, cleaning and sharpening tools, and related topics as needed.
- Provide demonstrations of the information given in the project. This is an opportunity for members to try out the tools and techniques you show them. Use audiovisual aids, such as videotapes and slides, as needed. This really is a "hands on" type of project.
- Organize interesting programs and field trips. This will help your group become acquainted with Extension agents and their staff, Master Gardeners, local nursery owners and their operations, and local parks.
- Arrange to see each member's project, if possible. Individual recognition is important when working with young people.
- Become familiar with other 4-H horticulture project opportunities and encourage participation. This project ties in with the 4-H Planting Ornamental Trees and Shrubs project.
- Attend available 4-H leader training meetings for guidance on your role as leader and operational procedures.
- Cooperate with your local Extension office by submitting all required records on your 4-H project group.
- Enjoy this unique learning experience along with your group!

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## GETTING TO KNOW YOUR GROUP

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Have you noticed how two rose bushes of the same variety will grow and bloom differently? So it is with the young people in your group. They may appear to look and act the same and to have the same needs, but each will be unique in learning strengths, abilities, and interests.

**Pre-teens** are starting to develop their own sense of identity, but still need the acceptance of their peers. Some characteristics of this age group are:

- Like to be in groups of own sex
- Will accept leadership and direction
- Have many interests, but still developing length of attention span
- Need lots of positive reinforcement

**Teenagers**, on the other hand, are more sure of themselves and what they like and dislike. Some characteristics of this age group are:

- Like to be in mixed, co-ed groups
- Need a “hands-on” type of leadership, lots of activities
- Want to make choices, but still want to conform to peer group
- Need more positive reinforcement

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

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Your group may already know how ornamental trees and shrubs affect them — the beauty the trees and shrubs provide, and possibly, how to plant and care for them. However, few at this age will know how to properly prune them. Some may have completed other 4-H projects, such as 4-H Planting Ornamental Trees and Shrubs.

This project teaches proper pruning techniques and how pruning affects trees and shrubs. The 4-H'ers will learn:

- When pruning is needed to correct a problem
- Types of pruning cuts and how to properly perform them

- What time of year to prune ornamental trees and shrubs
- How to care for and safely use pruning tools
- Pruning terminology
- How to use this information to help others by volunteering and presenting demonstrations
- Ways to use what they have learned to earn money and explore possible career opportunities

## INFORMATION YOU WILL NEED

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As a leader, you will be asked a variety of questions on pruning. You are not expected to know all the answers. There are many good publications, slides, and videotapes available for your use. However, allow yourself adequate time to prepare for meetings and gather the necessary resources, so you will feel more confident when questions do arise. At the end of this publication is a Resource List you may find helpful. Explore the VCE Web site at <http://www.ext.vt.edu/resources> for information, too.

## PROJECT MEETINGS

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Set up your meetings according to your timetable and the times when your group members will be available. Keep the meeting fun, interesting, and short (1 to 1 1/2 hours). Some suggestions for meetings:

### INTRODUCTION TO PRUNING

Discuss what pruning is and why a tree or shrub should be pruned. Show a slide set or videotape on pruning. (See the Resource List at the end of this publication.)

Discuss the project options the members have. They need to discuss with their parents the possibility of pruning some trees and shrubs in their yards. If a member has no specimens to work with, you may need to form groups or pick an alternate project for the individual.

The project plan with an outline of how it will be accomplished by the member should be turned in at the next meeting.

## **PRACTICE PRUNING TECHNIQUES**

Set up a practice session for the group to have “hands-on” training. Secure permission from a member’s parents, a local community center, church, or park and arrange for the group to practice the pruning methods they are learning.

Decide what tools are needed, who will supply the tools, and what to do with the pruning debris. Have the members determine what problems of the trees or shrubs can be solved by pruning.

If feasible, have a member videotape or take photographs of the work. The group can then make an “in-house” videotape or slide set on pruning and do a presentation for their parents and other visitors.

## **ENCOURAGE INDIVIDUAL ENTREPRENEUR OR VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES**

Plan a meeting to provide information and guidance for members who may want to use their newly gained knowledge to earn some money. Pruning goes hand-in-hand with part-time jobs, like lawn mowing and raking leaves.

Discuss what it would take for members or the group as a whole team to develop this type of business. Help with budgeting, advertising ideas, good business policies, equipment needed, and expenses they will encounter. Again, you may choose to have an expert in this area share with your group. (See Resource List for publications you may find helpful.)

Encourage your members to use their new skills as a volunteer. There are many places in your community where responsible and appropriately done pruning would be appreciated, such as community centers, hospitals, libraries, local parks or churches, municipal buildings, retirement homes, schools, and volunteer centers.

Discuss how to offer services, schedule the pruning event, arrange for tools and equipment, and make arrangements to clean up and dispose of debris afterward. (Refer to the *Advanced Master Gardener — Tree Steward Handbook* for ideas. See Resource List.)

## **GO ON A PRUNING FIELD TRIP**

Take your group on a field trip to see proper pruning in action. Arrange to visit a local park, nursery, or tree farm

to observe the pruning of various trees and shrubs. Discuss what techniques were used, what problems were solved by the pruning, what equipment was used, and what sanitary/safety precautions were taken.

## **CLEANING, SHARPENING, AND STORAGE OF PRUNING TOOLS**

Demonstrate the proper way to clean tools, sharpen blades, and store tools when not in use. You may do this yourself or invite a professional from a landscape company, the Extension service, or a grounds maintenance department to do a presentation.

Allow time for discussion and questions after the demonstration.

## **SHOWCASE ACHIEVEMENTS**

Provide a meeting where your group members can present their projects to each other and possibly their parents or community members.

For some, this may wrap up their projects. For others, it may be a progress report of their on-going projects. Encourage participation by all, and remember to positively reinforce each member’s efforts.

Also, take time as a group to write letters of thanks to the people who have provided demonstrations, tools, plants to prune, or were of other help to your group. People are always grateful to know they’ve been a help to you.

## **ENCOURAGE MEMBERS TO “BRANCH OUT”**

Talk with your group members about other community beautification or improvement groups that exist in your area. Acquaint them with national groups, such as “Take Pride in America,” and international groups, such as “Global Re-Leaf.”

Help your members explore the possibility of participating in such a group. Encourage awareness that their efforts can be helpful and far-reaching — the trees they prune today will be there many, many years from now.

## RESOURCE LIST

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### Slide Sets

Pruning Principles and Practices (by Alan R. McDaniel)  
4-H Planting Ornamental Trees and Shrubs (by Virginia  
Nathan and Diane Relf)  
Careers in Horticulture (by Vicki Reed)

### Virginia Tech Publications

388-161 Leader/Agent Guide - Leadership Life Skills  
388-452 Let's Start a 4-H Business - Leader's Guide  
426-930 4-H Planting Ornamental Trees and Shrubs Member's Guide  
426-931 4-H Planting Ornamental Trees and Shrubs Leader's Guide  
430-455 Pruning Basics and Tools  
430-456 Pruning Deciduous Trees  
430-457 Pruning Evergreen Trees  
430-458 Stop Topping Trees  
430-459 Pruning Shrubs

### Videotapes

Master Gardener Training Lecture Videotapes:

Introduction to Pruning (by Diane Relf)  
Pruning Fruit Trees (by Richard P. Marini)  
Pruning Shade Trees (by Alan R. McDaniel)  
Pruning Shrubs (by Diane Relf)  
Pruning Small Fruit (by Jerry M. Williams)

The above resources can be obtained from the Virginia Tech Office of Environmental Horticulture through your local Extension office.