



Pruning Safety

West Virginia University
Environmental Health and Safety



Pre-Pruning Activities

- Pruning involves the use of shears and saws, loppers, and manual and electric hedge trimmers. Pruning tools have sharp edges and pinch points and in some cases an additional electrical hazard.
- Review and understand information from the pruning tool brochure or booklet provided by the manufacturer, with particular attention given to safety procedures.
- Inspect pruning tools to determine if they are functioning properly, assure all moveable joints are lubricated and blades are sharpened adequately. For electric equipment, inspect the electrical cord and plug for defects.



Pruning Precautions

- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment, including safety glasses with side shields, hard hat, gloves, long-sleeved shirt, long pants, and steel-toed boots.
- Never prune trees or branches within 10 feet of power lines. Contact your local utility company to secure appropriately qualified tree trimming services.
- Do not carry pruning tools in your hands while climbing ladders and maintain a safe working distance from other workers when using hand pruning tools.
- Inspect the work area to locate any signs of bees, wasps, or other potential animal hazards.
- Do not cut branches bigger than the pruning tool was designed to cut.
- Before making a cut, know the location of your hands and fingers.
- Do not drop pruning tools from ladders.
- Carry pruning tools with the sharp end pointed down.
- Prior to dropping a branch, an audible warning such as “timber” shall be given.
- Take frequent breaks when performing repetitive tasks. Do not overtire yourself.
- Be aware of the weather conditions and drink adequate fluids to prevent heat exhaustion and dehydration.