



Pruning Basics

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Cass Turnbull

Founded Plant Amnesty dedicated to preventing the torture and mutilation of plants through mal-pruning.



Cass Turnbull's
Guide to Pruning

WHAT, WHEN, WHERE & HOW TO PRUNE FOR A MORE BEAUTIFUL GARDEN



From the founder of *Plant Amnesty*. ♦ Illustrations by Kate Allen



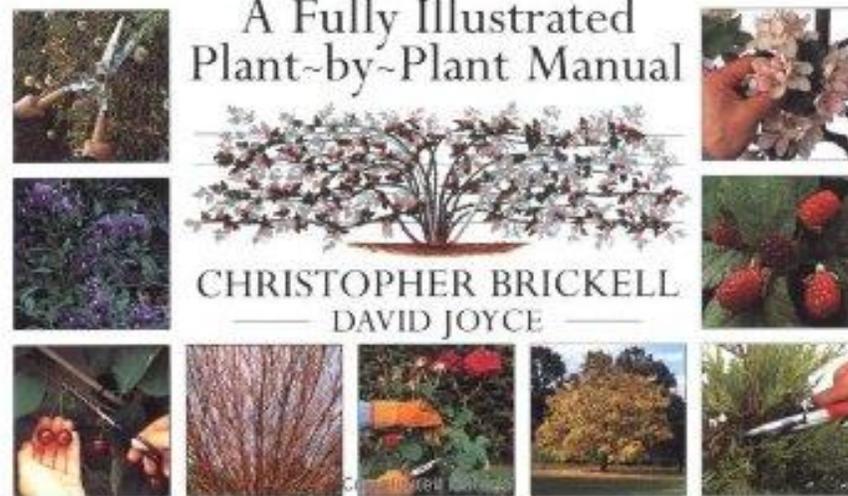
THE AMERICAN
HORTICULTURAL
— SOCIETY —

PRUNING & TRAINING

A Fully Illustrated
Plant-by-Plant Manual



CHRISTOPHER BRICKELL
— DAVID JOYCE —



Specialty Pruning – Not Covered Here

- Fruit Trees
- Hedges
- Roses
- Vines
- Topiary/Art forms

10 things to know before pruning and after this session

1. What is your pruning goal
2. How does the plant grow
3. Is it a flowering plant and when did it last flower
4. What is the pruning budget or—how much to cut out
5. What kind of pruning cuts to use
6. Where to make a pruning cut
7. Are there dead, diseased, or damaged wood on the plant
8. When are you done?
9. What tools to use
10. How to sharpen them

Tools

Hand clippers



Pruning saw



Loppers



Sharpener



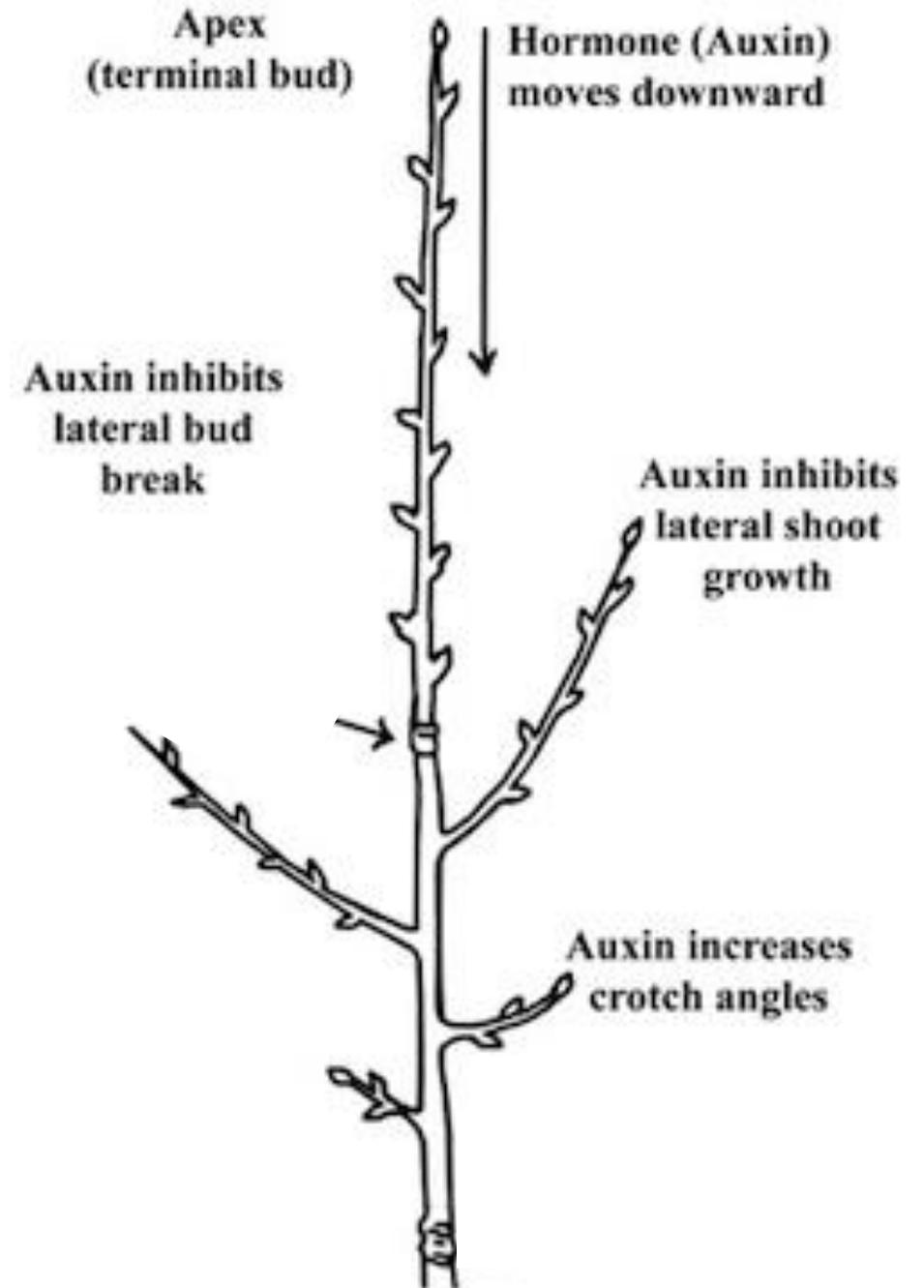
Felco, ARS, or Corona

The Basics

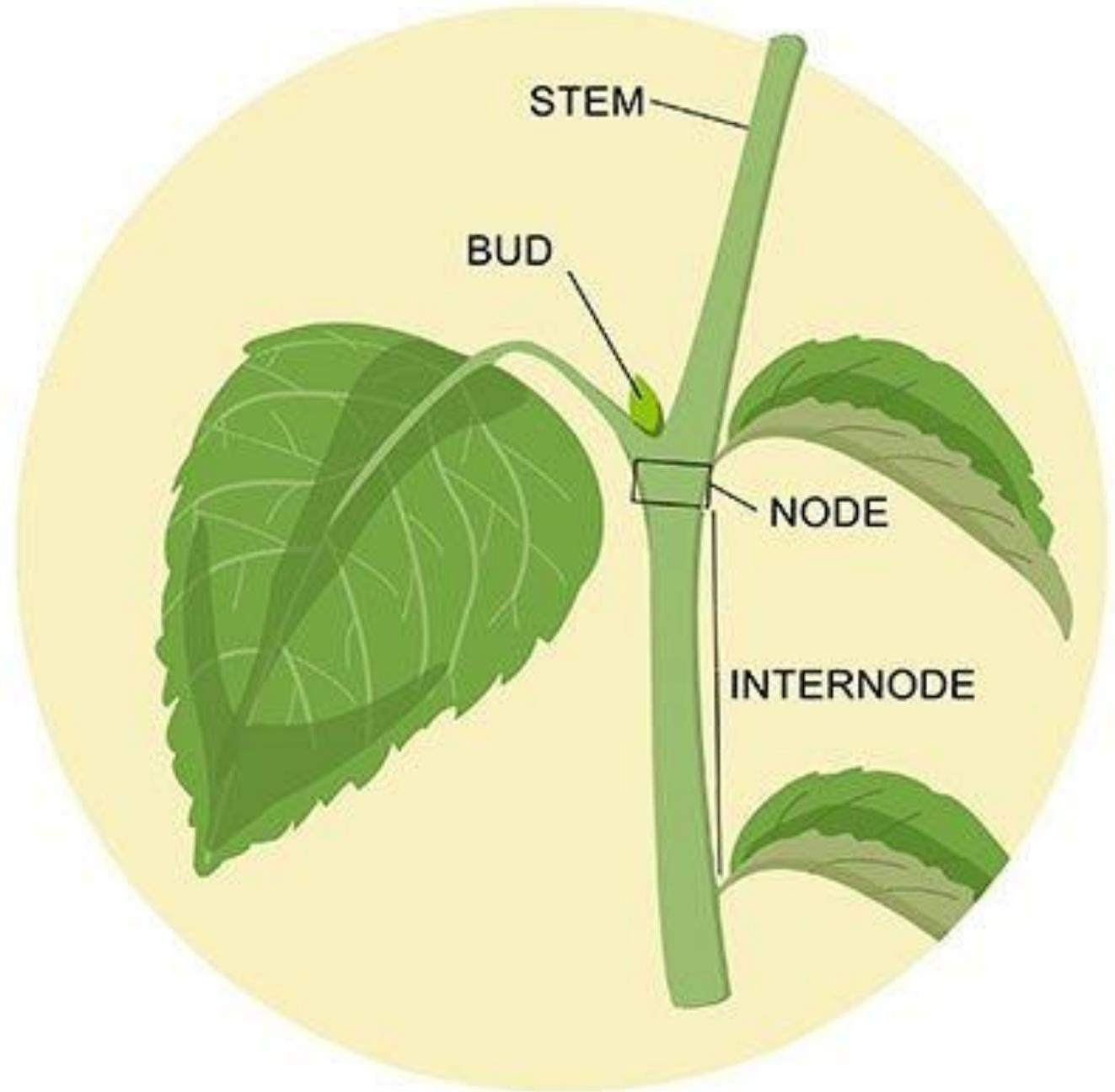
- Apical dominance
- Branching structure
- Pruning goals
- Pruning cuts
- Know your plants

The curious case of apical dominance

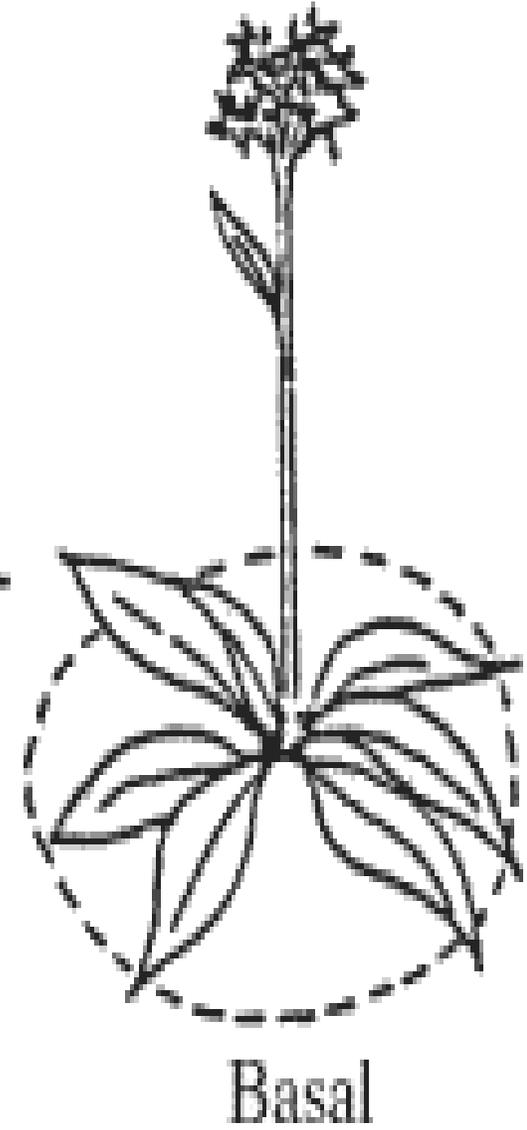
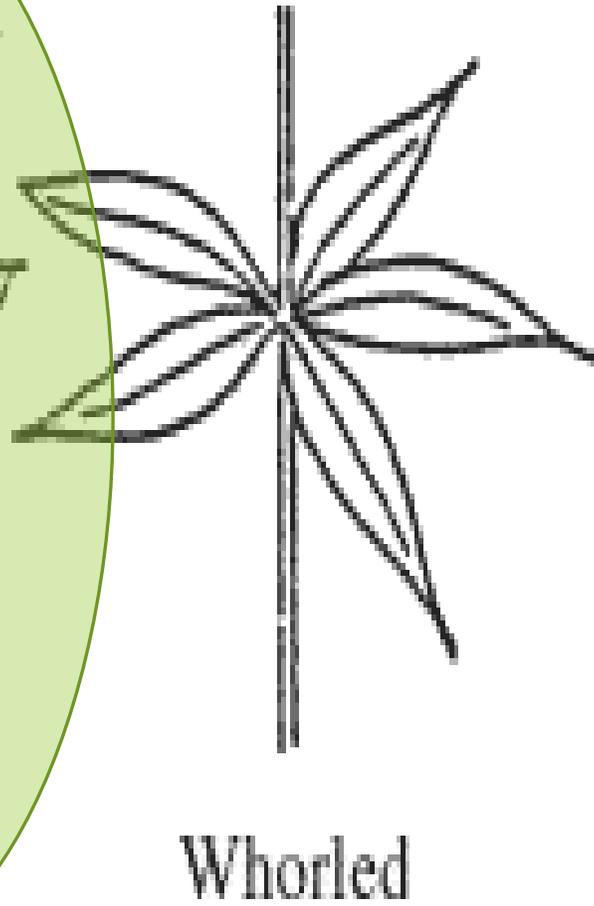
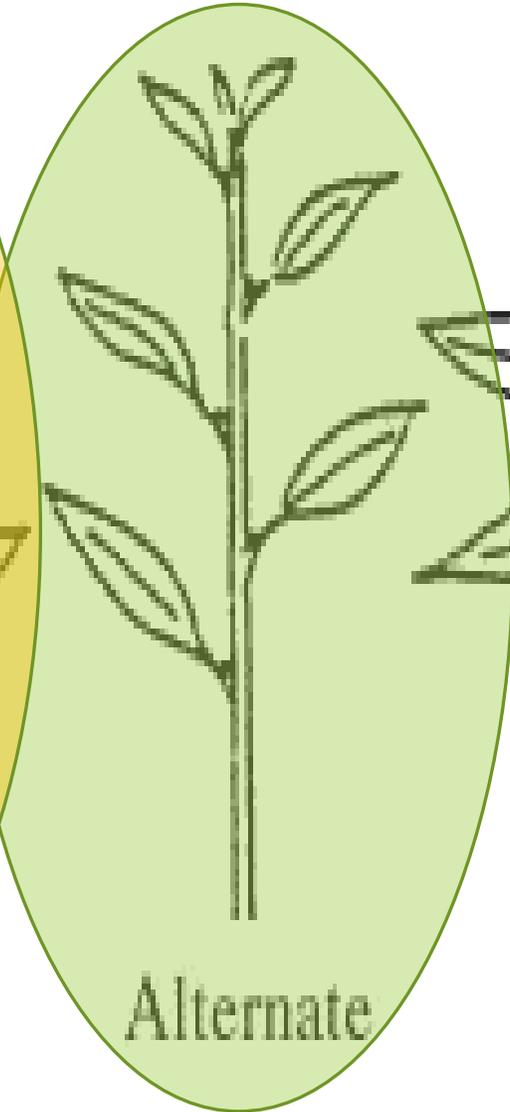
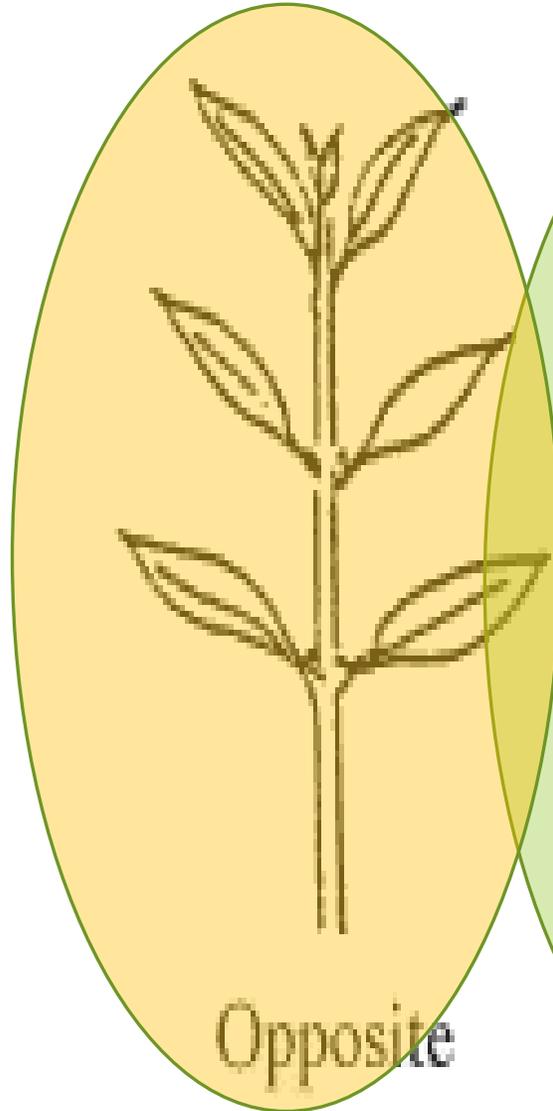
- Auxin, a hormone, is controlled by the apical bud
- Auxin suppresses lateral branch growth
- Causes the plant to focus on upward rather than outward growth
- Pruning disrupts this process; plant produces side growth and develops a “bushy” appearance.



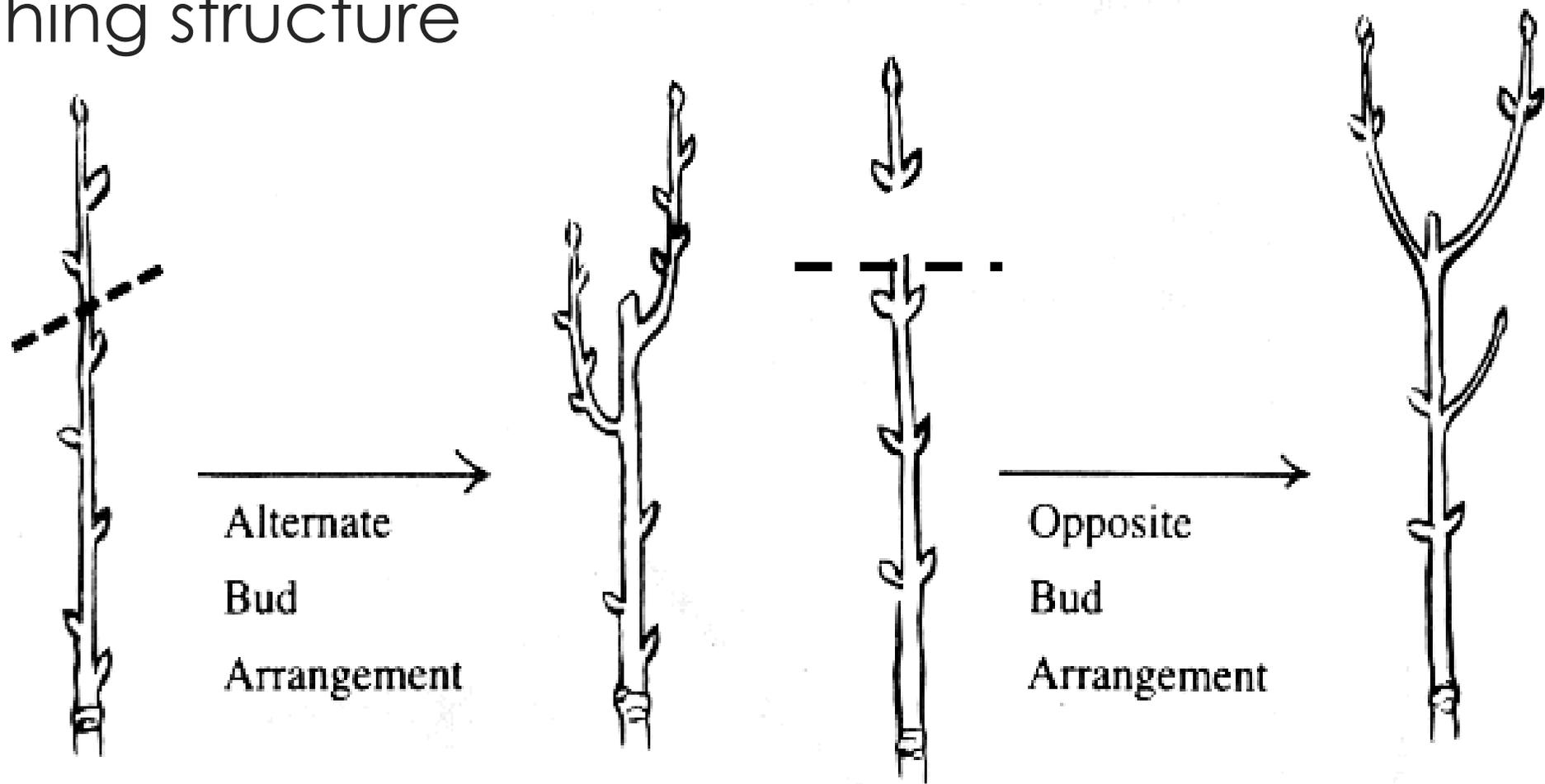
Nodes and Buds



Branching structure



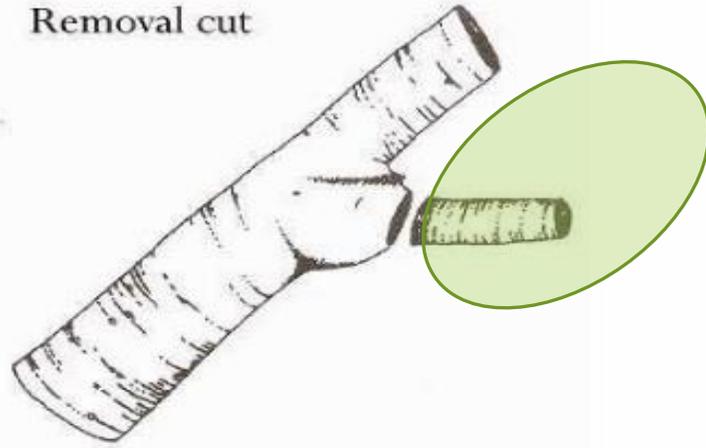
Branching structure



Pruning stimulates lateral branch growth **close to the cut.**

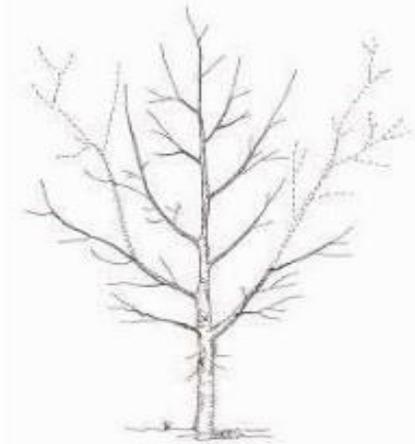


Removal cut

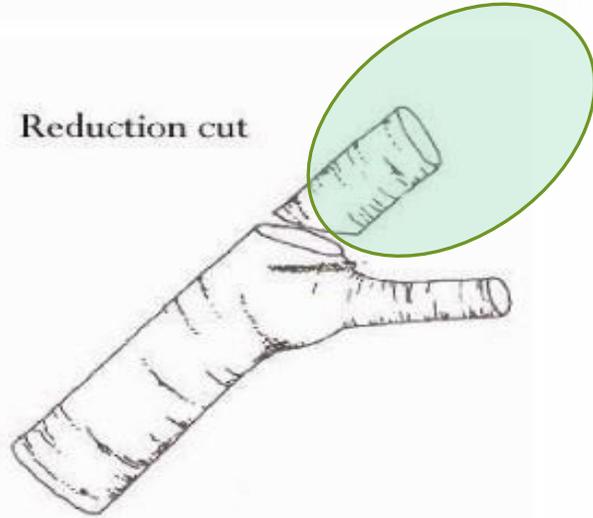


Removal Cut

- Prunes a branch back to the trunk or parent branch.



Reduction cut



Reduction Cut

- Shortens the length of a stem by pruning back to a smaller limb.

Pruning Budget – How much to prune

- Varies from plant and type
 - Kind of cut (reduction spends more than removal)
 - Size of cut (big spends more)
 - Total amount of foliage removed

General rule: No more than 25%

When to prune

- Winter dormant
 - Best time for seeing the shrubs form --No leaves
 - Easier to see damage or diseases
 - Good for summer flowering plants
 - Good for rejuvenation pruning
- Spring flowering—right after blooming
 - Produce growth on 'old' wood
 - Need the summer/fall season to develop the flower buds

Summer Bloomers

Hibiscus

Spirea

Panicle hydrangeas

Smooth hydrangeas

Beauty berry

Clethra

Spring Bloomers

Lilac

Forsythia

Fothergilla

Viburnum

Weigela

Chokecherry

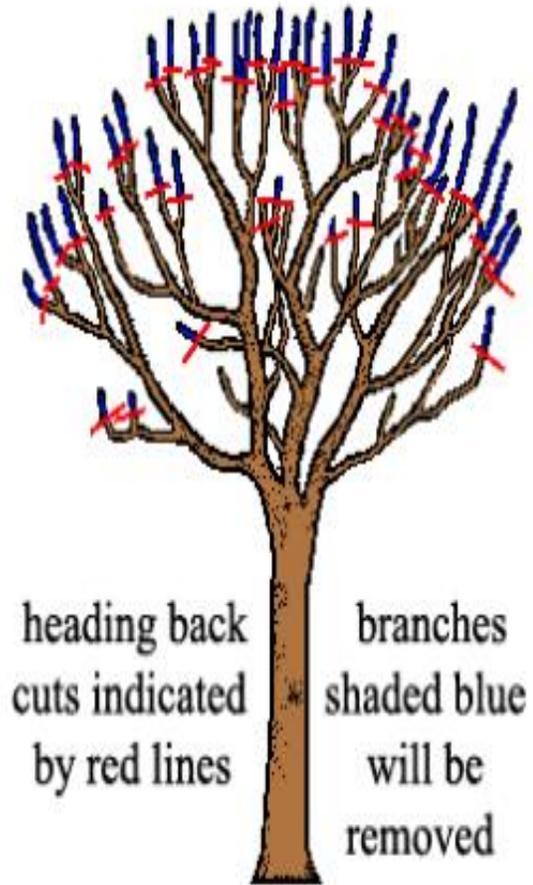
Mock orange

Rhododendron

Natural vs Sheared



Non-selective heading cuts











Shearing when done correctly

- Topiary
- Hedges
- Modern designs

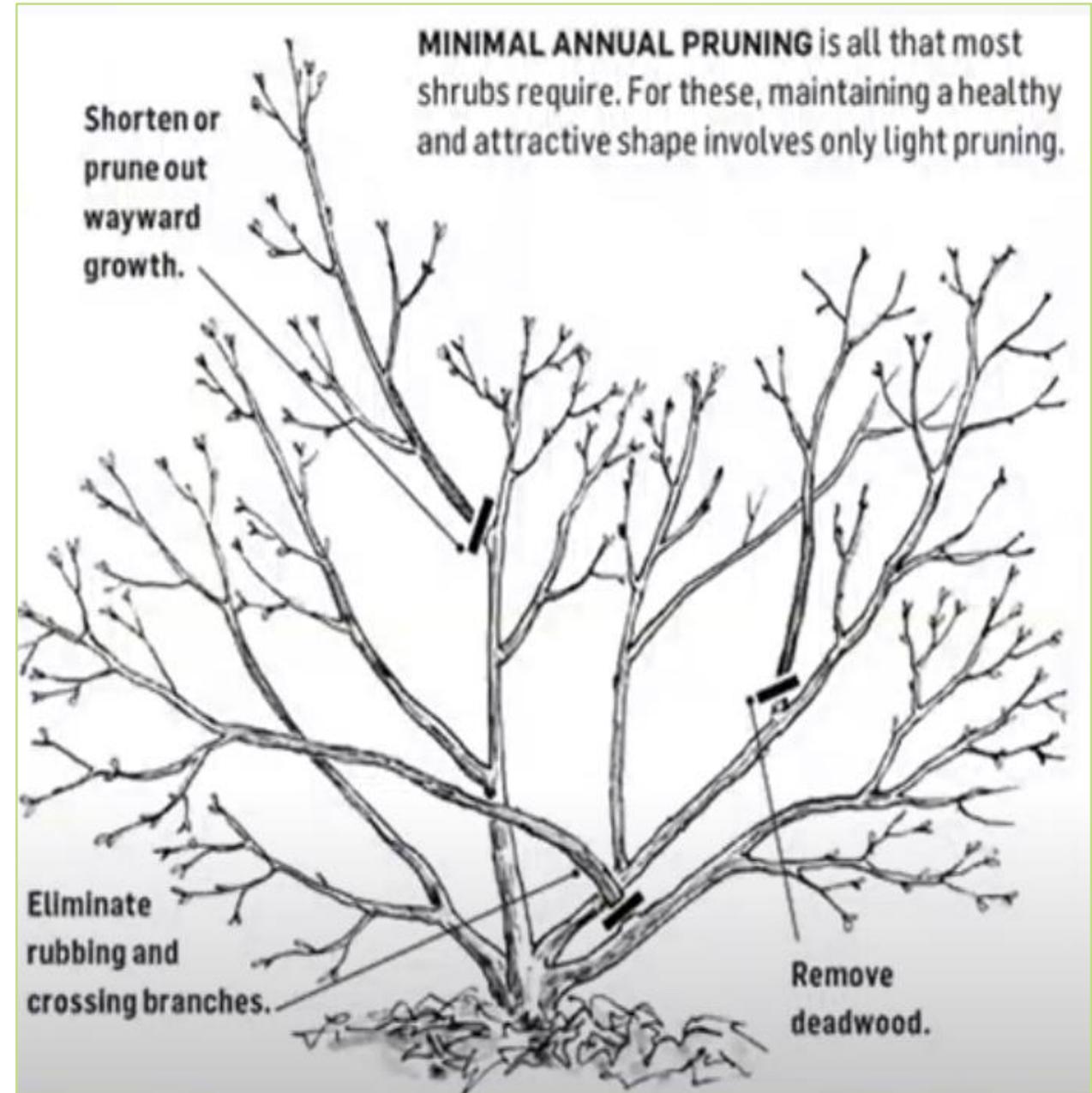


Corrective Pruning

- 3 Ds and 2 Cs

Dead, damaged, diseased

Crossing, crowded



Plant Growth Habit

Cane



Tree-like



Mounding



Pruning Cane-growing Shrubs

- Cane thinning
- Rejuvenation

Abelias

Allspices

Beautyberries

Chokeberries

Flowering quinces

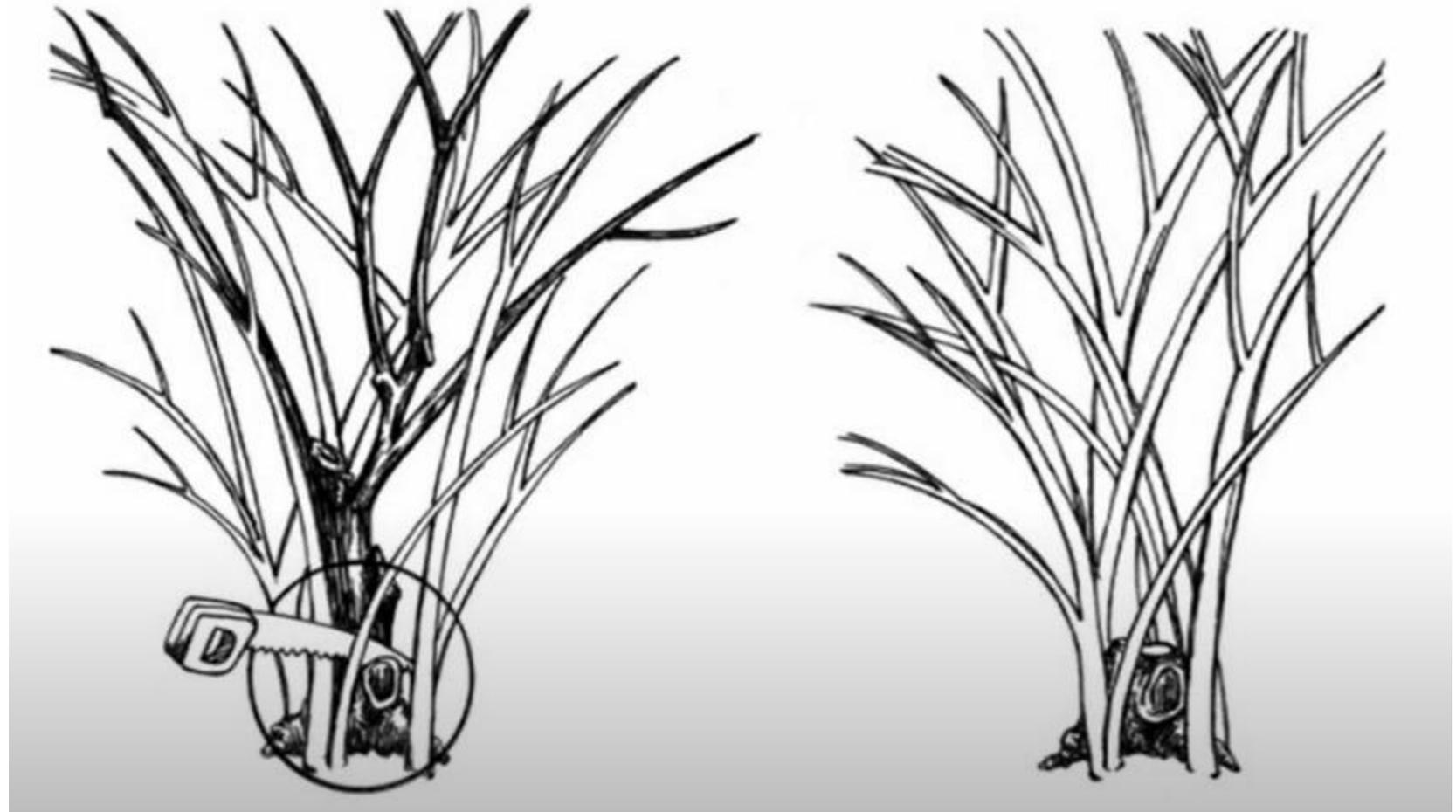
Forsythias

Japanese kerrias

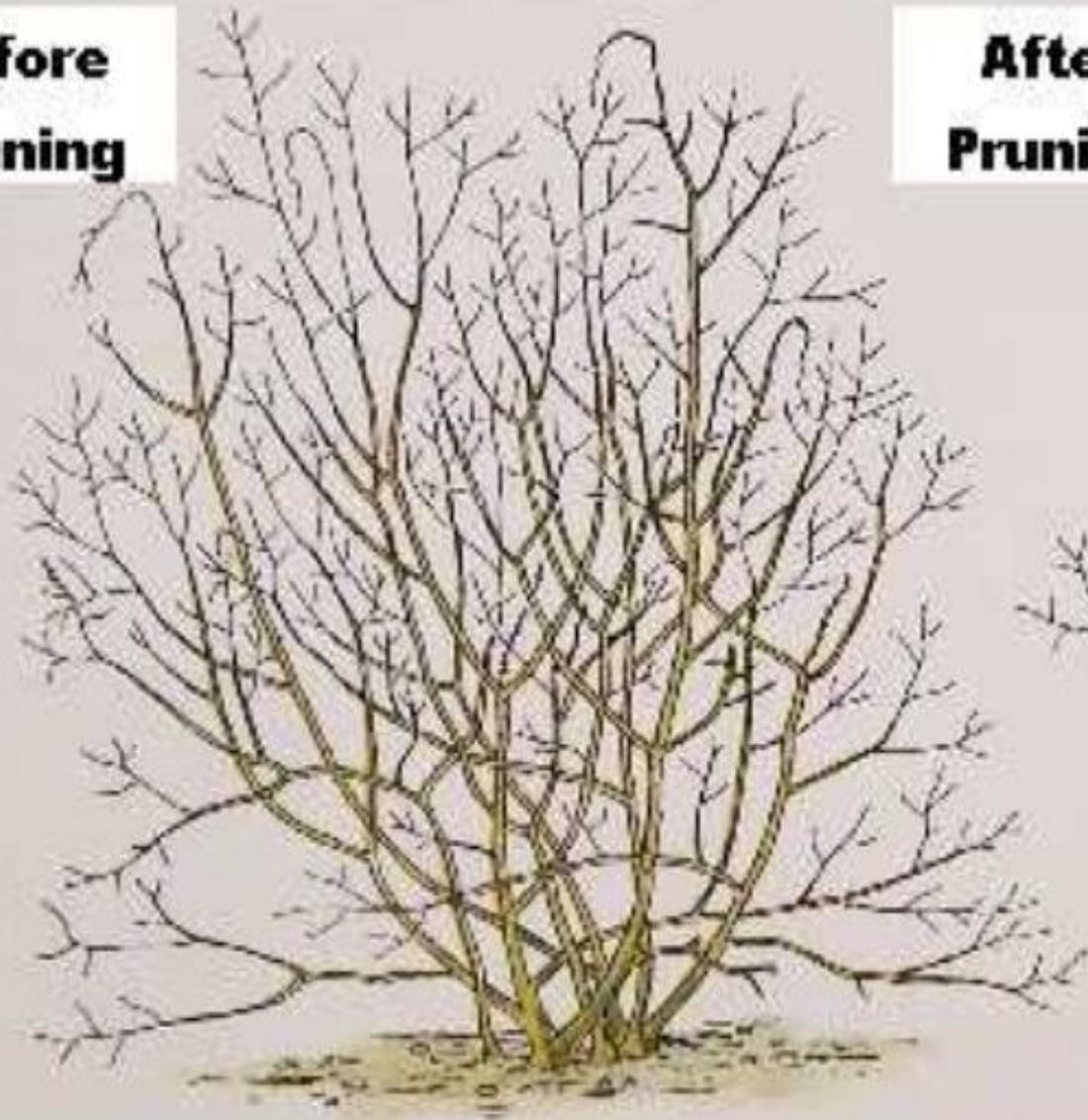
Lilacs

Roses

Hydrangeas



**Before
Pruning**



**After
Pruning**



Pruning Tree-like Shrubs

- Corrective
- Limb-up
- Thin out

Azaleas

Boxwoods

Camellias

Hibiscus

Holly

Jasmine

Loropetalum

Oleander

Roses

Viburnum





Arborizing

Turn a shrub
into a tree-
like structure





Pruning Mounding Shrubs

- Grab and snip

Barberry

Boxwood

Cistus

Fothergilla

Gardenia

Heath/heathers

Juniper

Sarcococca

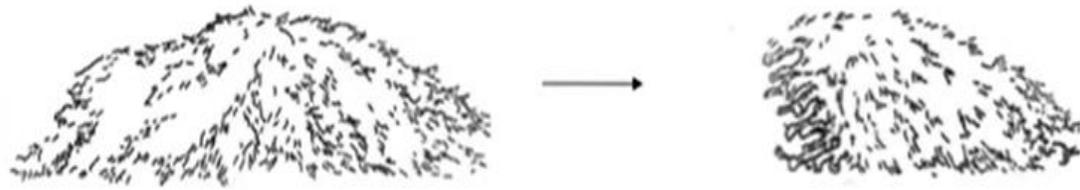
Skimmia

Spirea

Yew



Lift and remove



Hydrangea

- No need to prune if no problems
- Selective pruning to control as needed
- Remove
 - Deadwood
 - Crossing/rubbing canes
 - Canes lying on ground or touching structures
- Radical Reno
 - Cut to 3-6" above ground
 - Will grow back to original size
 - Will be floppier b/c stems are newer



Hydrangea Timing

- *H. arborescens* ('Annabelle')
Prune to ground in late fall or early spring.
Blooms on NEW wood.
- *H. macrophylla* ('Endless Summer')
Doesn't need much pruning. Blooms mostly on OLD wood
- *H. paniculata* ('Pinky Winky')
Prune for size control in winter or early spring. Blooms on NEW wood.
- *H. Quercifolia* (Oakleaf)
Prune right after flowering. Doesn't need much pruning



Rhododendrons

- Height and width reduction difficult to achieve without annual pruning.
- Things to consider
 - Deadwood
 - Limb up
 - Enlarge bed and under plant
 - Always cut above a dormant bud
- Some times can do a radical renovation—cut down to 1-3" to ground and let it regrow.



Red-twig Dogwood

- Grab and snip to clean up shape



Japanese Maple

- Deadwooded
- Removed crossing, wrong way branches
- Removal cuts to thin out as needed
- Limbed up lower branches



Indian Plum

- Removal cuts to thin out canes
- Reduction cuts to stiffen branches



Viburnum davidii

- Need little pruning
- Gets about 4'x5'
- Grab and snip
- Lift and snip
- Radical reno (spring)



Oregon Grape

- Cane grower-vertical type
- Thin canes to ground
- Head canes-cut to a leaflet
- Or cut all canes to ground to reset plant



Japanese Holly

- Mound grower
- Small leaves
- Prune for hgt control, but if fits in space leave alone
- Grab and snip
- Slant upwards-front & back
- Don't head-remember to cut to a node



Sasanqua Camelia

- Very prunable
- Blooms in winter
- Floppy—prune to control
- Grab and snip to thin layers



Witch Hazel

- Habit
- Winter bloomer, fragrant
- 15-20" tall and wide
- Pruning
- Site correctly
- Easy does it; subj to water sprouting
- After flowering, before summer
- Mostly removal cuts (thinning)
- Prune suckers



Double-file Viburnum

- Habit

Tree-like; Spring bloomer; water sprout easily

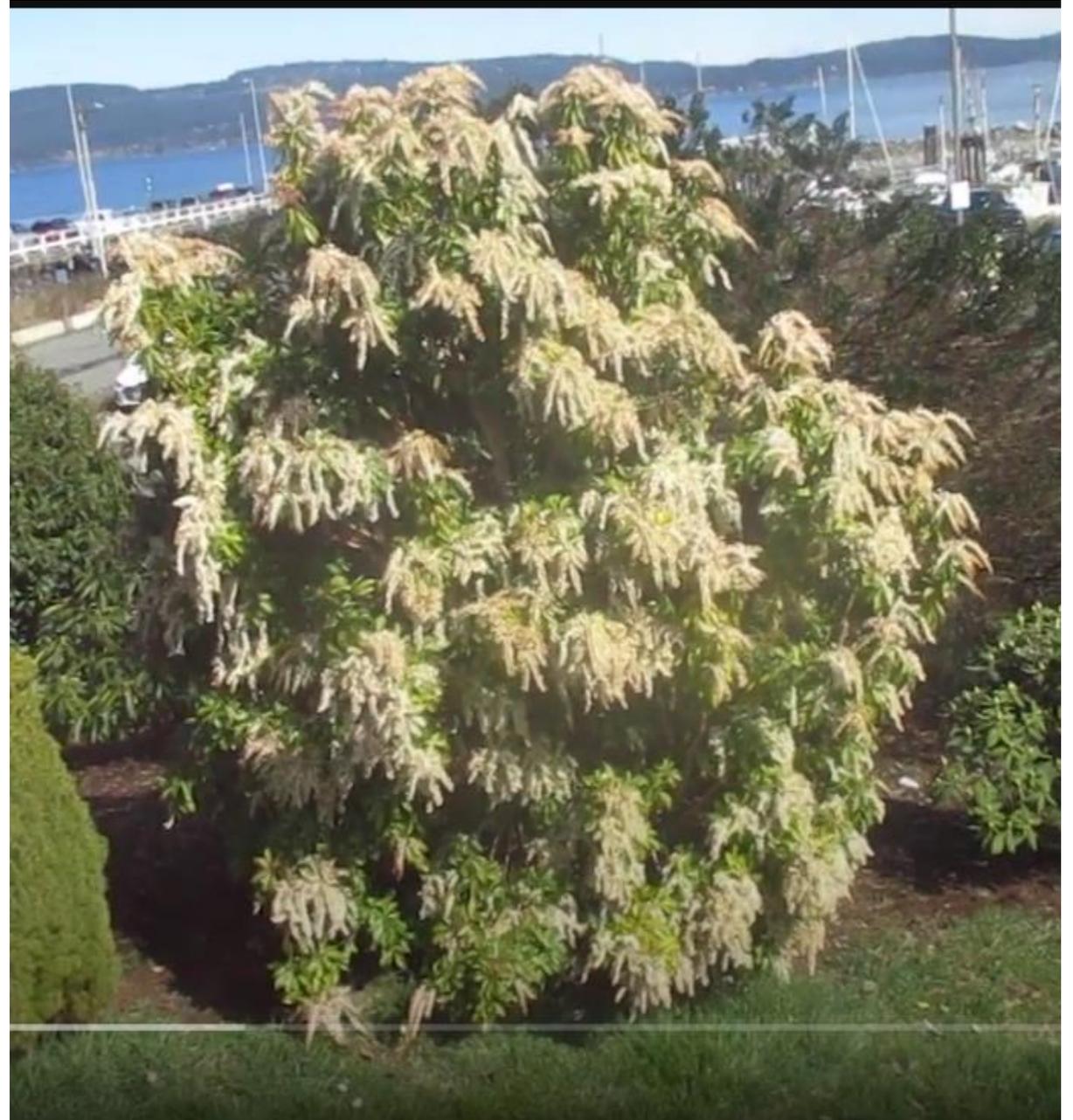
- Pruning

- Most pruning needs b/c planted in the wrong place
- Cannot control width of plant
- Thinning, reshaping right after blooming
- Limb up lowest branches
- Always remove suckers

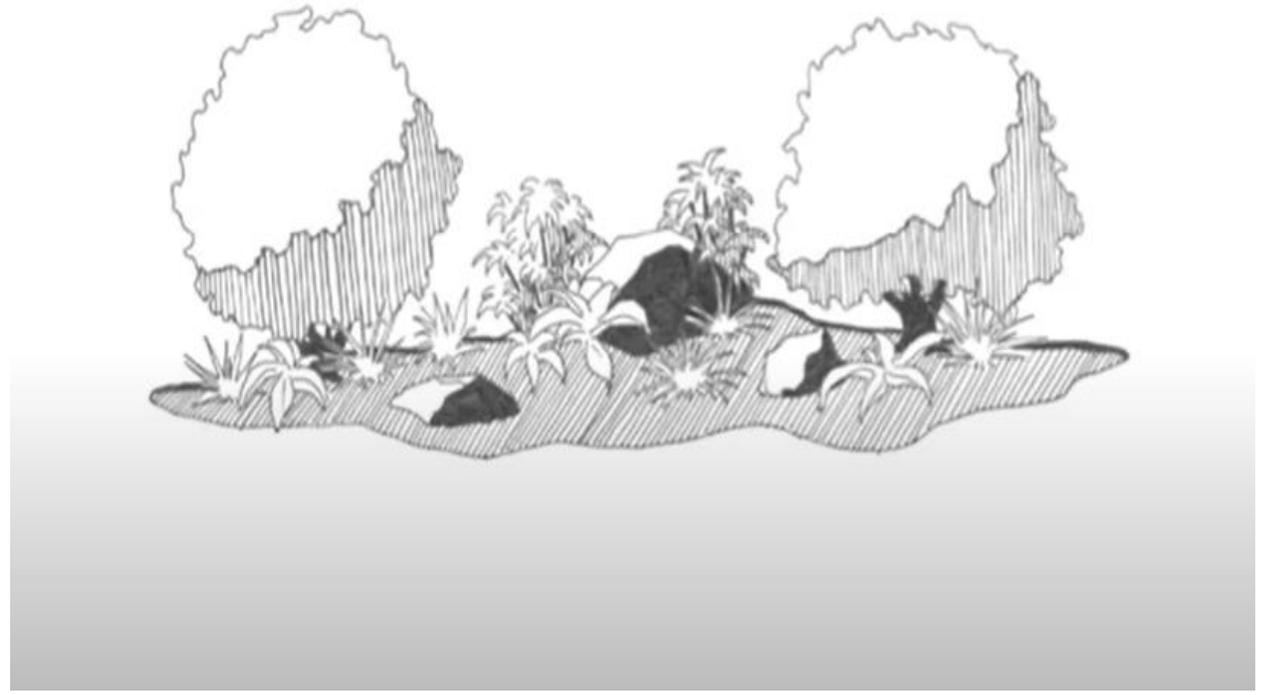
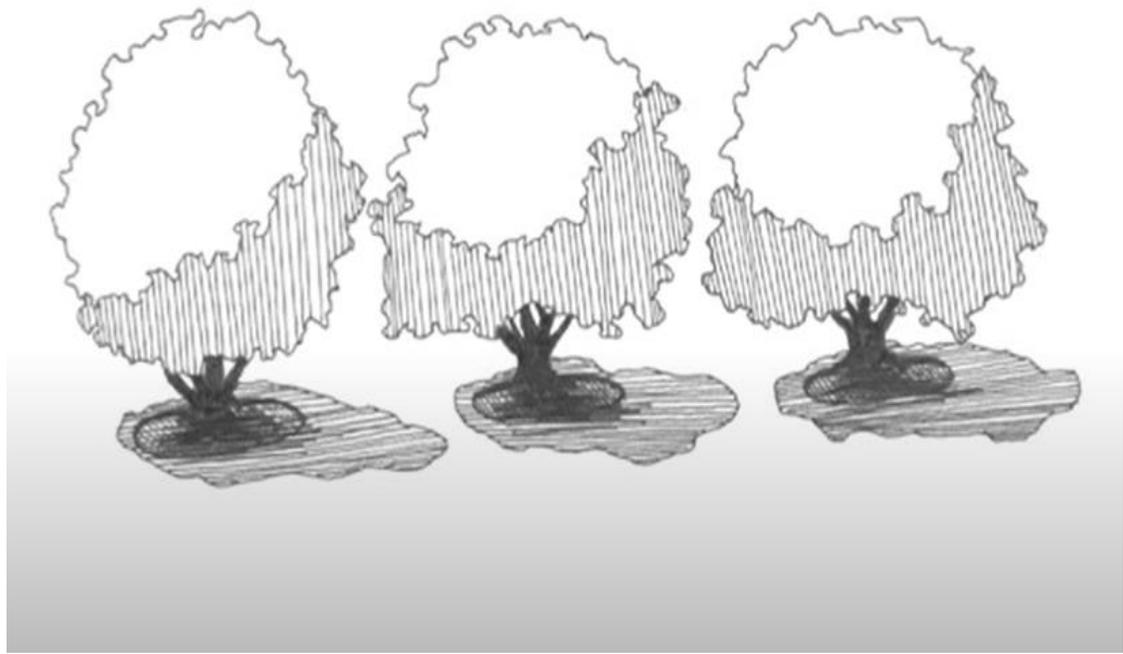


Pieris

- Habit
 - Tree-like; tidy, evergreen
 - 12' x 10'
 - Trouble free
- Pruning
 - Moderate thinning (25% of foliage)
 - Deadwood
 - Avoid size reduction
 - Gentle reduction









Fool the Eye



Summary

- Know how the plant grows
- Prune at the correct time
- Use the proper pruning technique
- Start with corrective pruning -- 3Ds and 2 Cs
- Use cuts to control direction of growth
- Know your pruning budget – don't cut too much at one time
- Use the appropriate tools
- Sharpen and disinfect

Thank you

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