



Garden Maintenance : Pruning Definitions

adapted from *The Pruning Book* by Lee Reich, Taunton Press, 2010

THINNING CUT aka TRIMMING CUT

- removes entire branch back to the ground, to the trunk or to a main branch – i.e. to its origin
- very little growth response
- opens plant up to light and air
- removes unwanted growth
- maintains overall form
- because you probably remove longest branches, overall size decreases
- careful with: water sprouts! to correct pruning mistakes:
 - cut lower than the cluster of buds at the base of the water sprout
 - otherwise new water sprouts will form

HEADING CUT

- shortening – not removing – a stem or branch
- removes branch tips to lateral buds or small side branches
- localized response: 2-4 new branches arise from buds/branches just below the heading cut
 - the stem tips produce the hormone auxin that regulates growth,
 - and supports apical dominance as well as suppressing lateral bud development
 - when this tip is removed, suppression is removed
- produces lush regrowth, more side branches, and increases branch density
- if upper branches compete with the terminal leader, head them back and the leader will continue to develop strongly
- heading is the way to make a hedge more dense
- sheared shrubs – heading is best combined with selective thinning to retain center growth

PINCHING

- a form of heading cut in soft growth of trees, shrubs as well as non-woody perennials
- slows stem growth, lateral buds and branch growth
- encourages branching and increases flowering