

In my early morning forays for coffee at the corner deli I have been accosted by several people with gardening questions.

"How should my hedge be pruned?" "Why doesn't my hedge grow out at the bottom?" "Can I prune rhododendrons now?"

So I thought I'd devote this space to some information about pruning.

But, don't go out and start on your hedge now. September is a little too late to cut because the new growth will not have time to



The Island Garden

By Roger Marshall

harden, and it will get killed by frost in mid to late October. Next spring a hedge pruned now will have to put out new growth which will weaken it. If we have another drought next summer, a weak hedge might not survive.

Having said that, take a look at the picture of the first hedge. Notice how it is cut flat on top and the top has grown very wide. The width of this growth has cut down on the light that can reach the lower parts of the hedge, so no growth has taken place lower down. Consequently, the hedge is all top with big gaps in the lower areas, gaps which are large enough for animals to easily walk through. The only way to get this hedge to grow thicker at the bottom is to prune the top way back to allow light to get lower down.

The best solution is to cut the hedge to the ground and as it grows cut it with a taper making the top much thinner than the bottom. Ideally, the top of a privet hedge should be about 70 to 90 percent of the width of the bottom. The second picture shows how a hedge, cut with a slight taper has grown thick and strong all the way to the ground. This type of hedge cutting provides a pretty good barrier to animals, although I have seen deer simply

run right through it.

The next question pertains to rhododendron bushes. "When can they be pruned?" The answer is simple, they can be pruned any-time, but — and it's a big but — if you prune them now you'll lose next years flowers. As the picture shows, the flowers are contained in the middle of a leaf spray. If you prune that off, the plant simply does not have enough time to grow new flowers before next spring.

The best time to prune rhododendrons is immediately after they've bloomed and the flowers have dropped off. That happens in mid-spring. If you prune the plant back then, next season the shrub has all summer to make new flowers, and you won't miss a years worth of growth.

"What about pruning raspberries and fruit trees?" Don't worry about either right now. Wait until mid-winter when you want to get outdoors and enjoy the crisp cold air. Prune out all the dark brown/gray stems from your raspberry patch, and then cut the remaining stalks to about 4 feet high. The plant will send out smaller side shoots at the tip, which will increase the number of raspberries to harvest during the summer.

Similarly, fruit trees can be left until after the leaves have dropped off, although I like to prune out water shoots all summer. After leaves have dropped and the tree has gone dormant, cut out water shoots. These are the straight shoots that grow up the middle of the tree. Prune away any crossing branches that may rub together. Where the branches



An example of a hedge not properly trimmed.



This is what a properly pruned hedge should look like

rub exposes the branch to disease.

And finally, prune the tree for shape. Never take more than one-quarter of the tree off at any time. If you are restoring a tree do it over two or three seasons. Chop the prunings and use them for kindling. Apple and cherry have a

nice aroma when burned.

So there you have it. Prune at certain times of the year to suit the shrub or tree. Don't try and prune everything now.


If you have a gardening question send it to the Jamestown Press, and we'll try to answer it.



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Ways To Eat A Pumpkin Cooking Demonstration

Master Chefs Phil Larson and Kevin Gaudreau will demonstrate and provide expert advice and recipes for enjoying that traditional autumn icon, the pumpkin. Also Thanksgiving pumpkin pie advice for pumpkin from a pumpkin, not a can.

All registration fees will go to the Jamestown Community Farm and the Conanicut Grange.

Where:	Conanicut Grange
When:	7:00 PM Wednesday, October 5
Registration:	Limited to first 25 registrants
Registration Fee:	\$20.00

To Register contact Lisa Primiano at 423-9885.

The Friends of the Jamestown Animal Shelter invite you and your four-legged friends to

a Day @ the Park

FORT GETTY PAVILION
Saturday, October 8, 2005
10 AM - 3 PM
Donation: \$10/carload, \$15/van

Volunteers Needed!

Food & Fun for All!

FAMILY FUN

Doggie Fortune Teller • "OPI" Doggie Manicures • Pet Photos • Paw Print Plaster Paris Plaque Making
Pet Adoptions • Frisbee Toss & Jump Dog Competition • Bobbing for Bones • Animal Blessings

6:30 - 11 PM
DOGGIE BLACK TIE BALL @ PAC
\$50/person, \$25/dog
Formal Dress Required for All Dogs
Cocktail Informal Attire for Owners
4 Course Sit Down Meal for ALL
RESERVATIONS REQUIRED
Silent Auction
Music & Dancing

Call 423-9677 for Reservations & to Volunteer