

California Cooperative Extension

Master Gardeners of Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties (and San Benito Co. too)

How to Sharpen Gardening and Pruning Tools

WHY SHARPEN

Work smart, not hard, enjoy the task

Sharp tools are better for the plant's health

Dull blade tears or chews the plant, stresses it and leaves it more susceptible to fungi and disease

Physically it's easier on your wrist, grip and shoulder muscles through less effort

If you have arthritis, it's something to think about

BE SAFE

Always push a file across the blade in a motion away from your body

Use a vise to stabilize the tool for better and consistent control

Use safety glasses

Use gloves

START WITH CLEAN TOOLS

Remove all rust, disassembling the tool if necessary

Use a small steel brush, 250 grit sandpaper, or coarse steel wool

Dirt and sap contribute to the spread of soil-borne diseases and attract and hold moisture leading to rust

TOOLS

The most popular pruning tools are the bypass pruner and bypass lopper.

Also used is the Anvil Hand Pruner

THE BEVEL

The angle of the blade's cutting edge is called the bevel

The factory had ground it for the best efficiency

The key is to sharpen tools maintaining the factory-ground bevel

You want to avoid making a "reverse bevel"

We're going to file the edge to expose clean metal

USING A WHETSTONE

Set the whetstone on a flat surface

Add a few drops of oil or water, depending on the stone

Run the sharp edge of the blade at the correct bevel angle as if trying to slice off a thin slice of the stone

Remove any burrs

USING A FILE

Secure a 10" – 12" mill bastard file

Stabilize the tool in a vise or on a solid surface to avoid injury and ensure an even stroke

Do not drag a mill bastard file backward over the blade on the return stroke; one way only

Do not use oil with a file, metal shavings will clog the file's serrations

SHEARS

Shears have two beveled edges, both need to be sharpened as described above

USING A SHARPENING TOOL/MULTISHARPENER

These tools have a bar with a tungsten or carbide edge

Hold the tool with the blade facing you

Pull the sharpening tool toward you along the edge, at the proper bevel angle and with a curve motion

Make a simple pass on the back of the blade to remove burrs

SPECIAL NEEDS

When dealing with infected plants it is necessary to sterilize your pruners or shears between cuts

Use a 10% solution of bleach and water, i.e., one part of bleach to nine parts of water in a spray bottle

This is water; to avoid rust, dry thoroughly and then oil the metal surfaces of your pruners

FINAL

When you are finished make sure all burrs have been removed

Oil all metal surfaces and put a drop of oil for the pivot nut and unexposed surfaces

If your tools have wooden handles, treat them with boiled linseed oil

¿Does anybody have a pair of pruners that need love?

¿**ANY QUESTIONS?**

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