



[Pumpkin Brook Organic Gardening, Inc.](#)

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Greetings,

July means time to prune at Pumpkin Brook. Our shears are sharpened and we are pruning for plant health and aesthetics during this hot spell. See article below which is a reprint from an earlier newsletter on why we prune.

Made in the Shade

In these dog days of summer, shade gardens can provide a cool respite from the heat. I spent part of a recent weekend on a tour of ponds and water features. Many were located in shade, where the sound of running water was more than welcome on a hot day.



Kirengeshoma palmata

Most "shade tolerant" plants actually do best in part shade with a few hours of morning sun or some filtered sunlight coming through the canopy of trees. A rich woodland soil can be built up over a period of years and can tide the garden through weeks of heat and humidity.

Contrast is key in a shade garden. As we go along, we learn that most woodland plants bloom in spring when the overstory trees are bare or just beginning to leaf out. In the deep shade that results after the end of May, turn to foliage to carry the garden through the season. For example, think of the texture of a ruffled heuchera leaf planted next to a drift of delicate Japanese painted fern. Or think of how the color white stands out in the shade, whereas in the summer



This could be the view as you relax in your shade garden!
One of our customers is enjoying this!

sun it can look like too-bright blob!

We know of a select number of perennials that bloom in summer and fall in shade. *Aster divaricatus*, Woodland aster, comes to mind immediately as a tough plant that will withstand summer drought and has a long season of bloom come cooler weather. If you have sufficient moisture in the shade, *Kirengeshoma palmata* (Yellow waxbells) is a stunning, shrub-like plant from Asia that attracts attention. The native summersweet, *Clethra alternifolia*, is a fragrant shrub for moist areas or good garden soil. Many named varieties are now available, the best being 'Sixteen Candles' which acts like a large glowing perennial as its leaves turn golden yellow in the fall.

Because shade plants tend to have small flowers, planting them in masses is a good idea. Think of the impact of a sea of heart-leaved *Brunnera* with its periwinkle-colored spray of flowers, as opposed to just one or two plants that can get lost in the background.

Don't forget to make a place to stop and take it all in! Whether it's a tucked-away bench, a hammock or even some well-placed large sitting stones, the shade garden is all about relaxation.

Now is the time to make notes about changes you'd like to make to your existing shade garden. It's also a good time to dream about creating one. Fall could be the perfect time to begin the process - so please let us know how we might help you get started. You could be resting in the shade at this time next summer.

Update on Tick and Mosquito Spray Program

This past month has been a tough one. Frequent rain alternating with high heat has resulted in fast reproduction rates for both ticks and mosquitoes. Al and Carmine have been out nearly daily to reach all our clients on the spray program. We all notice that there are still mosquitoes out there, with ticks not far behind! We aim to reduce the population significantly but know we cannot get every last pest on a specific property.

Summer Watering Tips

Please click [here](#) for watering instructions in times of high temperature!

Please continue to check yourself, your family and your pets for ticks on a daily basis. We still have available the "Personal Best" canisters of cedar oil repellent for \$10 that can be applied whenever you know you will be walking at the edge of the woods. Our staff likes to use these when working in such areas. Let us know if you need one, and our Plant Health Care staff will deliver it during their rounds.

Why We Prune?

(reprinted from June 2011)

Pruning is a horticultural technique that involves selectively removing specific plant parts to maintain the health and aesthetic structure of the plant.



Lisa Prunes a Shrub

We often get phone calls from homeowners who have waited too long to prune. Their shrub or tree has grown out of its intended space or has become diseased as a result of neglect. Pruning should be seen as a regular aspect of maintenance and not a corrective fix. Shrubs and trees can be one of the biggest investments you can make in your landscape, and preventatively maintaining the health of this asset is well worth it in the long run.

Many people mistakenly think that pruning is done strictly for aesthetic reasons to give shape to a shrub or tree. But there are actually many other reasons why we prune:

- 1. To enhance the health and vigor of the plant:**
Pruning for plant health involves the elimination of dead, dying, rubbing, crossing or diseased wood. A dying branch can be an entry way for insects and diseases that could spread to other parts of the plant. Thinning out the shrub can increase air circulation which will create conditions that are less friendly to disease causing insects and fungi. It will also allow more sunlight to penetrate the internal part of the shrub thereby enhancing foliar growth throughout. Pruning can also stimulate new growth near or below

the pruning cut. Sometimes pruning can be employed to help a plant recover from construction damage or natural "winter kill."

2. **To enhance its function in the landscape:** Various shrubs can have different functions in the landscape. While some shrubs are grown for their flowers (ex: Rhododendrons) others are grown for their stems (Red Twig Dogwood) and others for their berries (Beautyberry). Pruning can be implemented to help the plant give the best "show" possible. Rhododendrons can be pruned to reduce density so that energy is diverted into the production of fewer but larger flowers. Old growth on red twig dogwoods can be pruned out so that the newer more colorful stems are prominent. Cutting back beautyberry in the spring will produce more attractive berries on an upright plant in the fall. Pruning can also be implemented to create a special effect such as an espalier or a formal hedge.
3. **To restore the original design intent or improve appearance:** If a shrub has been well maintained, pruning should be somewhat inconspicuous. The natural shape of the plant should be maintained and "lollipop" style shrubs should be avoided. Not only can this unnatural style of pruning be tacky, it is also bad for the plant causing new growth to condense at the edges while the interior becomes barren. Pruning can be done to control size while keeping the proper scale in reference to the surroundings. Unwanted suckers and branches should be removed as they can detract from appearance and create unnecessary energy draws on the plant.
4. **For safety to protect people and property:** One of the most common pruning situations we find is shrubs that are too close to the house. Branches that rub up against the house bring moisture with them and can contribute to rotting. For this reason it is very important to keep shrubs pruned off the house. Large dead or weak branches that hang over a house or overhead wires should also be removed to prevent construction damage and dangerous electrical hazards. For security purposes large shrubs or tree

branches should be pulled away from obscuring the view to entry points in the home as this can be a welcome sign for burglars. Sometimes we come across large shrubs at the edge of a driveway that may interfere with either pedestrian or vehicle traffic and these shrubs should be pruned back hard too.

Proper pruning can make a huge difference in the overall feel of your landscape! We have a very knowledgeable and well trained staff who will take great care to maintain the naturalistic shape of your plants.

Should I Wash the Vegetables & Fruits I Get at the Store?

We thought you might be interested in the obtaining a [guide](#) from the Environmental Working Group (EWG).



The EWG always recommends eating more fruits and veggies and buying them organic if you can. But sometimes organic produce can cost more or isn't available. That's why they created the Shopper's Guide to Pesticides in Produce - so you'll know which fruits and vegetables have the most pesticide residues and what you can buy instead to lower your exposure to potentially harmful chemicals.

Psst! Did you know that the EWG put us on the Dirty Dozen plus list?

July Is the Time for....

- Shearing back lavender, dianthus and spring blooming heaths to promote clean new foliage
- Keeping up with weeds
- Pruning spring blooming trees and shrubs
- Watering containers deeply and foliar feeding only when temperatures are



Tower Hill Botanic Garden
in Summer

below 90 degrees

- Watering all woody plants installed or transplanted during the past 3 years ([summer watering tips](#))
- Deadheading perennials and annuals to promote rebloom
- Dividing and transplanting tall bearded iris
- Harvesting vegetables and planning fall crops as space opens in the garden
- Deadheading rhododendrons and mt. laurels
- Cutting back reblooming roses above a set of five leaves
- Cutting back vegetative canes of shrub and climbing roses (all leaves, no buds) to promote better shape
- Touring other gardens for inspiration

Note: [Tower Hill Botanic Garden](#) is open till 8 on Wednesday night from now until September. Have dinner in their Twigs Cafe and enjoy the view of Mt. Wachusett.

Quick Links

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If we haven't been in touch with you yet about Summer Pruning, please let [me](#) know. We may have missed you while you were out enjoying the warm temperatures at the beach.

Sincerely,
Priscilla

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