



Early Spring Garden Tips

Spring is almost here. Get ready!

Nancy and Pierre Moitrier

DURING THE GARDEN'S DORMANT MONTHS, take the opportunity to observe structural plants that are looking less than stellar. Oftentimes, removal is not the only choice. A stylist can take an unflattering haircut and create something better to redefine a person's appearance. You can do the same with your garden. You wouldn't remove your hair just because it's unruly, would you?

- **Deadheading** trees or shrubs is the removal of spent flowers or seed pods and allows the new season's flowers to develop unimpeded.
- **Lifting** removes lower branches of a tree where more clearance is desired for vehicles, pedestrians, or plantings. Consult an arborist for removal of branches more than three inches in diameter for safety but also to understand the implications of pruning mature branches.
- Special effects result when **pollarding** or **coppicing** select trees and shrubs such as *Cotinus*, *Catalpa*, and *Paulownia*. Cutting all shoots back to a desired low height will rapidly push enlarged, vigorous foliage that creates a unique display. Copious watering and fertilizer are necessary for best results.
- **Reduction** is performed to diminish the overall size of a tree or shrub. No more than 25% of the foliage should be removed from any branch. Be careful, because indiscriminate reduction pruning may take the form of "topping," which is an incorrect form of pruning that is detrimental to trees.
- **Rejuvenation** pruning is performed on shrubs that have been neglected, are lopsided, or were damaged during a winter storm. Remove weak shoots to the ground; prune other stems to one foot. Feeding, mulching, and watering will stimulate new growth. Follow up in one year with formative pruning to restore the shrub's characteristic habit.
- **Renewal** is practiced on shrubs that produce flowers on new wood or shrubs that produce vividly colored stems. Remove the oldest branches of the shrub by pruning at ground level to produce vigorous shoots ensuring a good display.
- **Shearing** is used to develop special forms like hedges and topiary. Use sharp tools for clean cuts and crisp lines. Taper the pruning (wider at base) to allow sunlight to reach all branches and don't forget to thin regularly!
- **Thinning** focuses on removing congested growth in trees or shrubs but does not affect the overall shape of the crown. Thinning allows extra light to penetrate and helps reduce wind resistance. Thinning can help expose a plant's ornamental features such as attractive bark, or it can be performed to remove old and unproductive wood on deciduous flowering shrubs. 🌿



NANCY AND PIERRE MOITRIER operate *Designs for Greener Gardens*, a boutique gardening company that specializes in designing, creating, developing, and maintaining distinctive gardens of all styles. Pierre hails from France and brings the charm of the Old World to their garden creations. Nancy's 40 years of gardening experience combined with her design knowledge and innate artistic eye add a superior dimension to their garden projects. Follow *Designs for Greener Gardens* on Facebook.