



MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

THINKING SAFE AND GREEN



AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

#2

PRUNING SAFETY

Information given here is intended for use by program representatives, master gardeners, and those they train.



Data available from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission indicate approximately 27,000 people nationwide received hospital treatment for pruning injuries during 2006. Many of the injuries were to fingers and involved lacerations. **English and Spanish language safety videos on tree care safety are available for loan from the ANR Environmental Health & Safety Library at <http://safety.ucanr.org>.**

Pre-Pruning Activities

- Pruning typically involves the use of shears and saws, loppers, and manual and electric hedge trimmers. Accordingly, pruning tools have sharp edges and pinch points and in some cases an additional electrical hazard.
- Thoroughly review and understand information from the pruning tool brochure or booklet provided by the manufacturer, with particular attention given to descriptions of safety procedures.
- Before using, always inspect pruning tools to determine if they are functioning properly, including assuring all moveable joints are lubricated and blades are sharpened adequately. For electric equipment, inspect the electrical cord and plug for defects.

Pruning Safety Precautions

- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment, including safety glasses with side shields, hard hat, gloves, long-sleeved shirt, long pants, boots, and sunscreen.
- Never prune trees or branches within 10 feet of power lines. Contact your local utility company to secure appropriately qualified tree trimming services.
- Maintain a safe working distance from other people when using pruning tools or equipment.
- Carefully inspect the work area to locate any signs of bees, wasps, or other potential animal hazards.
- Do not attempt to cut branches bigger than the pruning tool was designed to cut.
- Before making a cut, always know the location of your hands and fingers.
- Do not purposefully drop pruning tools from ladders.
- Always carry pruning tools with the sharp end pointed down.
- Prior to dropping a branch, an audible warning such as “timber” should be given.
- Take frequent breaks when performing repetitive tasks. Do not overtire yourself.
- Be aware of the weather conditions and drink adequate fluids to prevent heat illness.
- Never use electric pruning tools or equipment when it is raining or in wet conditions.
- If a ladder is used for pruning, then basic rules for ladder safety should be followed such as: always set the ladder on a solid, level surface; stepladders should be fully opened with spreaders locked; never step above the top two rungs of a stepladder; never stand on a rung or step and face away from the ladder; and always mount ladders from the center and climb/descend the ladder using both hands.