



# Master Gardener™ Program

## Pruning Basics

**Ann Geyer**

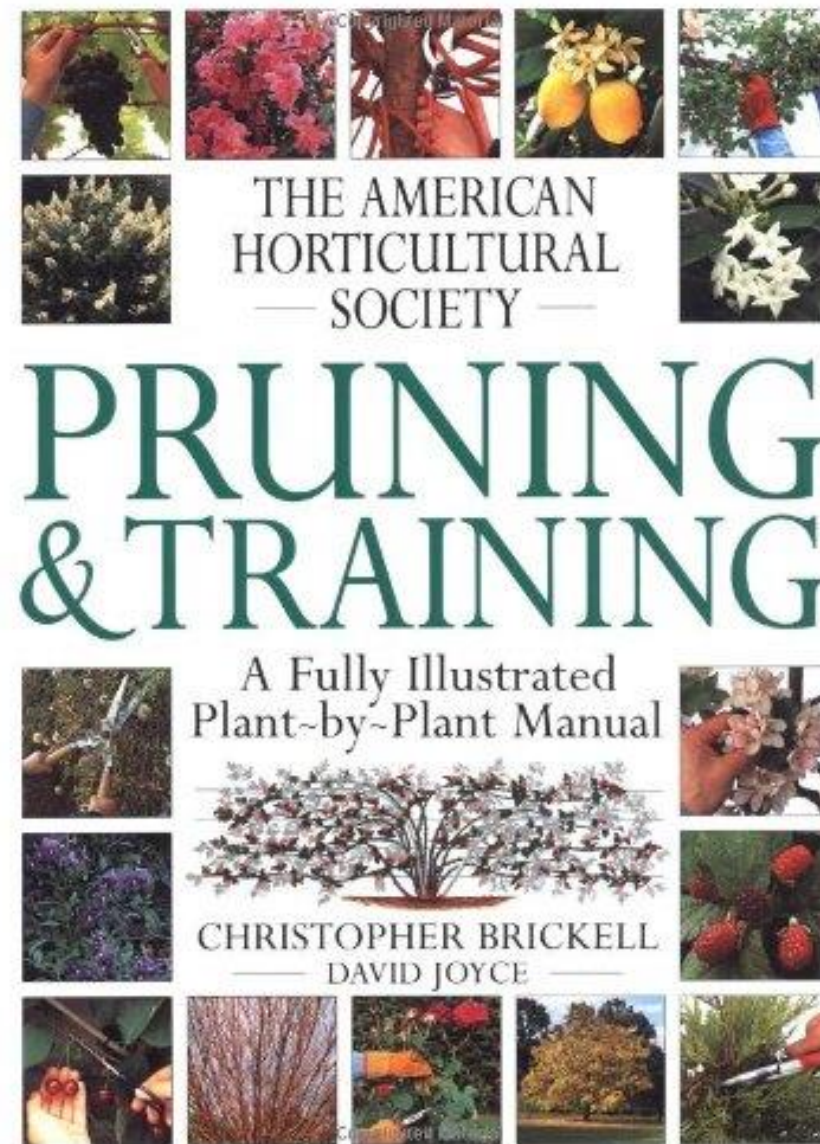
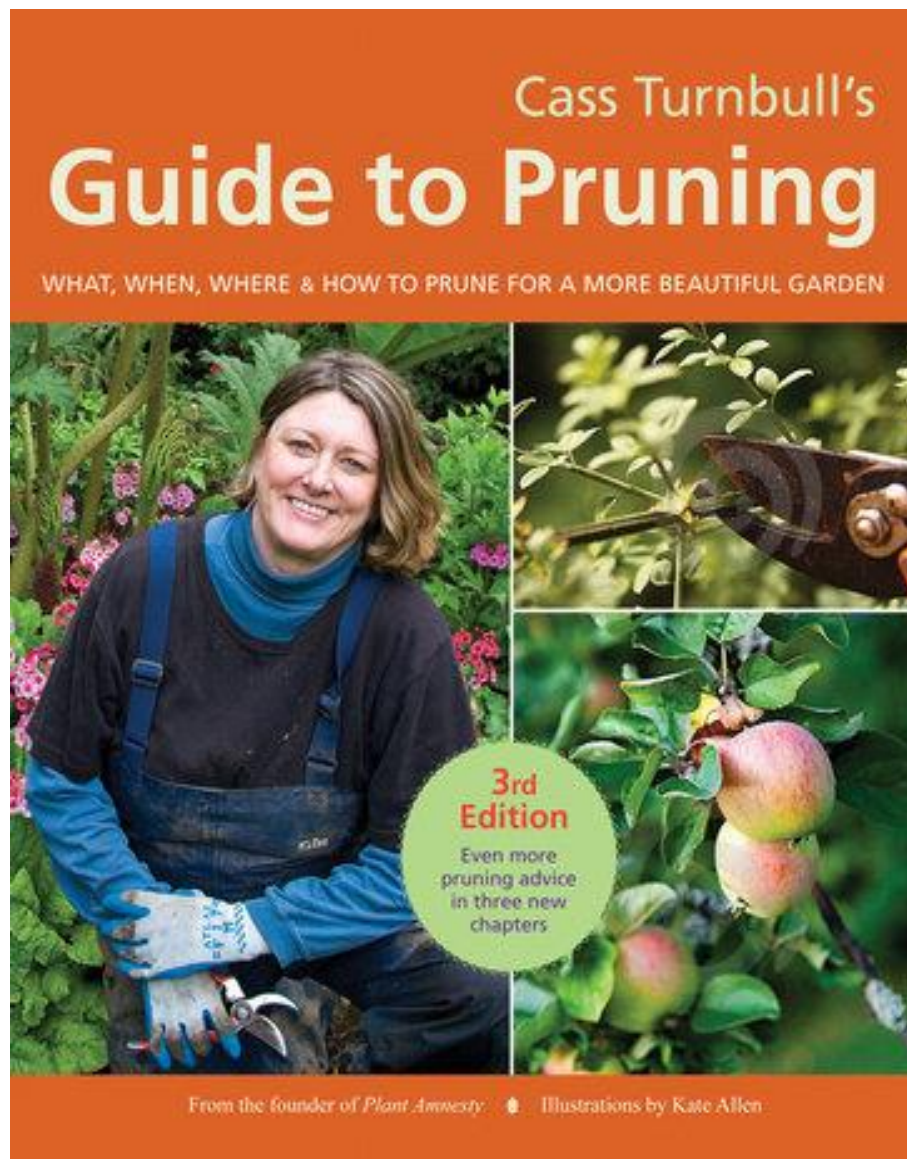
# Cass Turnbull

Founded Plant Amnesty  
dedicated to preventing the  
torture and mutilation of plants  
through mal-pruning.





# Pruning Sources



# 10 things to know before pruning and after this session

1. What is your pruning goal
2. How does the plant grow
3. Is it a flowering plant and when did it last flower
4. What is the pruning budget or—how much to cut out
5. What kind of pruning cuts to use
6. Where to make a pruning cut
7. Are there dead, diseased, or damaged wood on the plant
8. When are you done?
9. What tools to use
10. How to sharpen them

# Tools

Hand clippers



Felco, ARS, or Corona

Pruning saw



Lopers



Sharpener

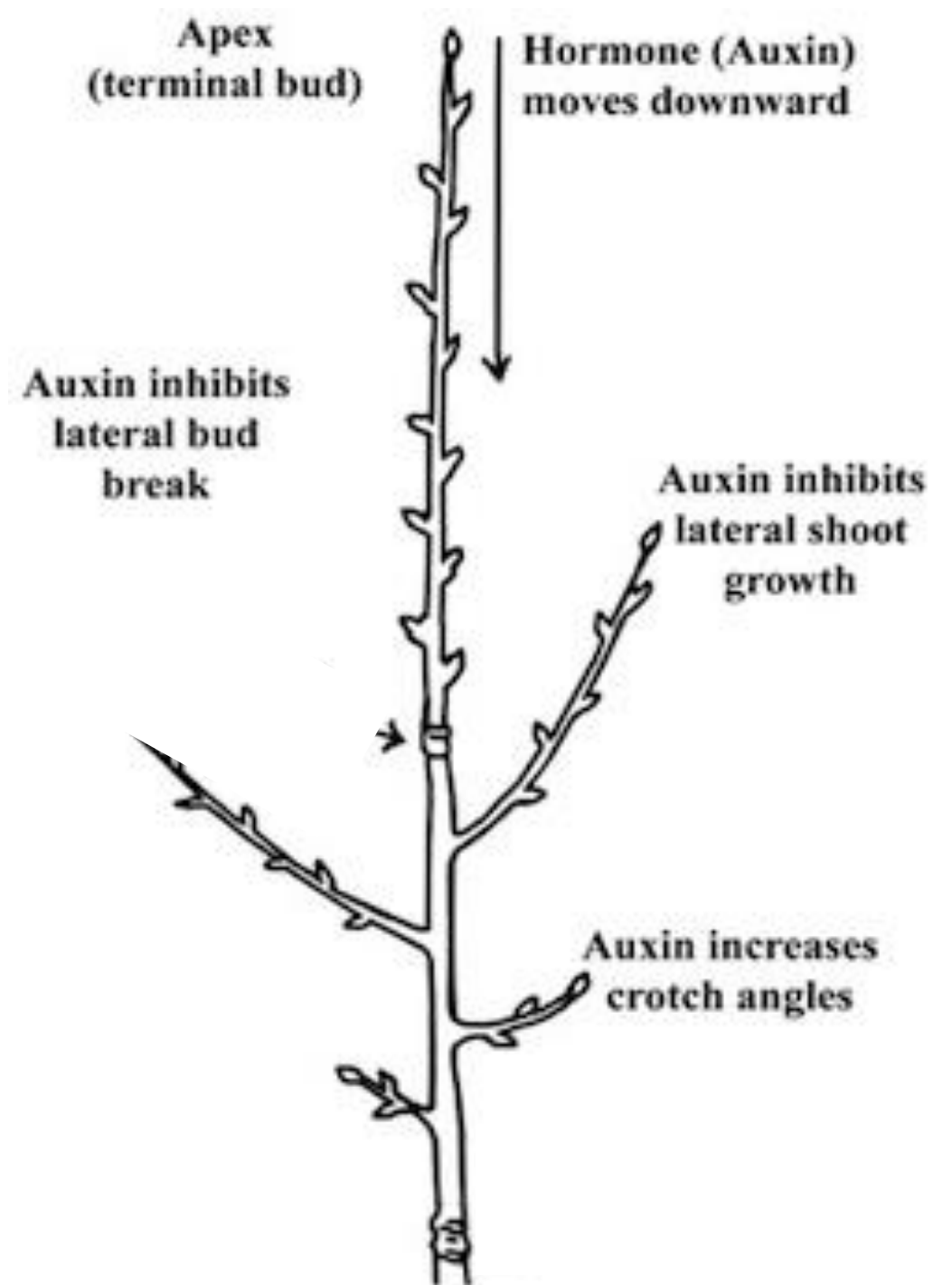


# The Basics

- ▶ Apical dominance
- ▶ Branching structure
- ▶ Pruning goals
- ▶ Pruning cuts
- ▶ Know your plants

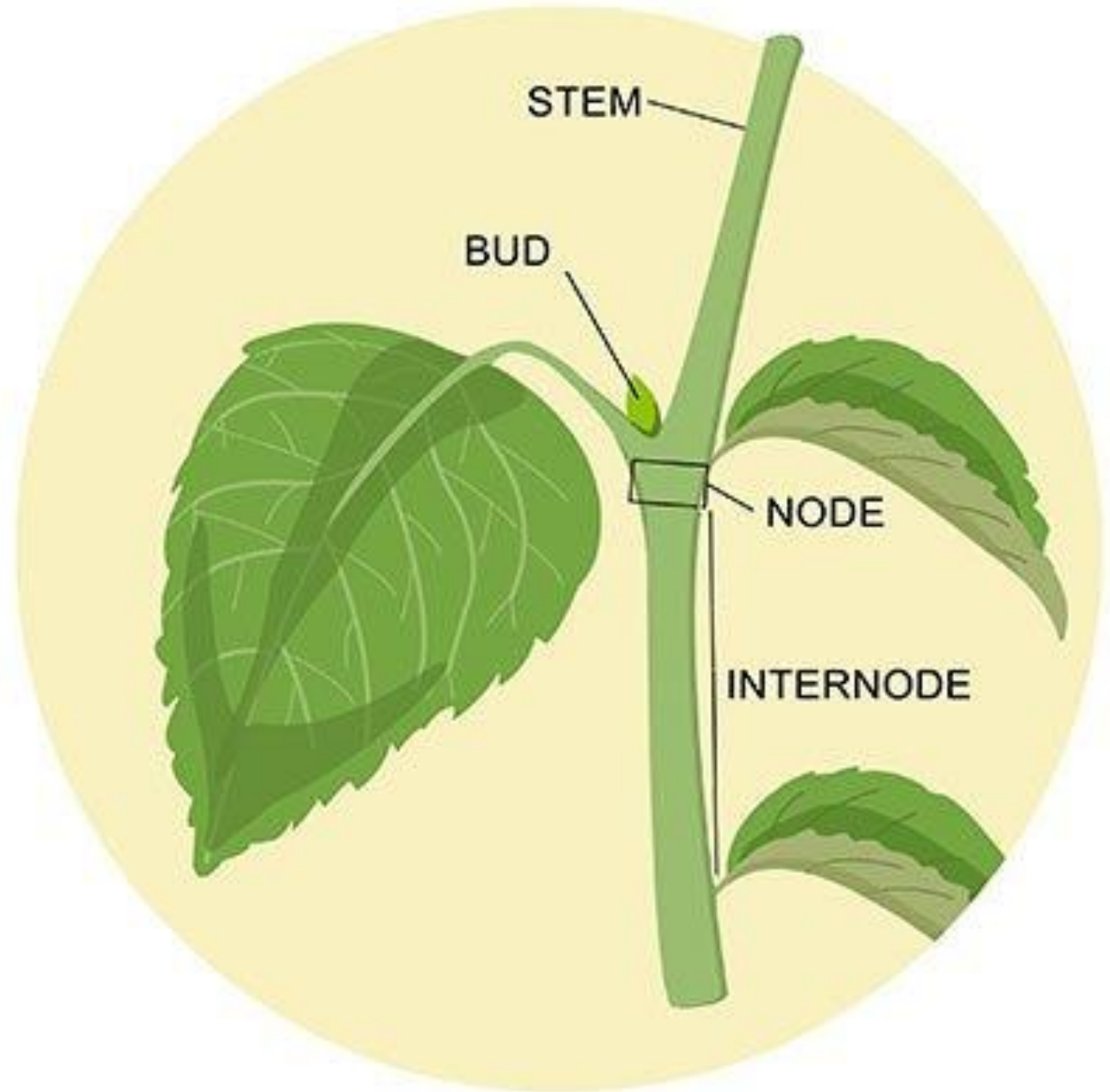
# The curious case of the apical dominance

- ▶ Auxin, a hormone, is controlled by the apical bud
- ▶ Auxin suppresses lateral branch growth
- ▶ Causes the plant to focus on upward rather than outward growth
- ▶ Pruning disrupts this process; plant produces side growth and develops a “bushy” appearance.



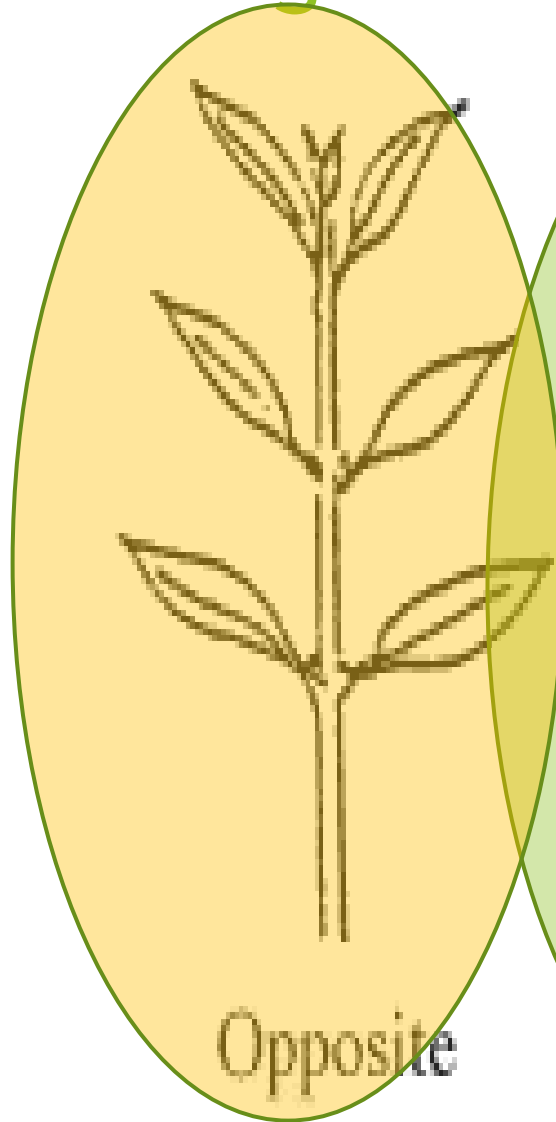


# Nodes and Buds

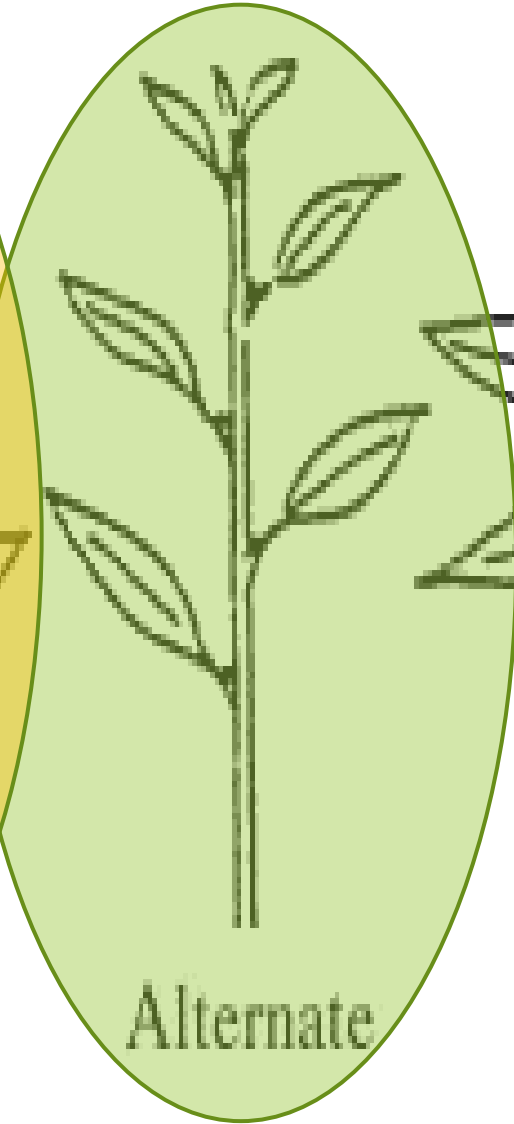




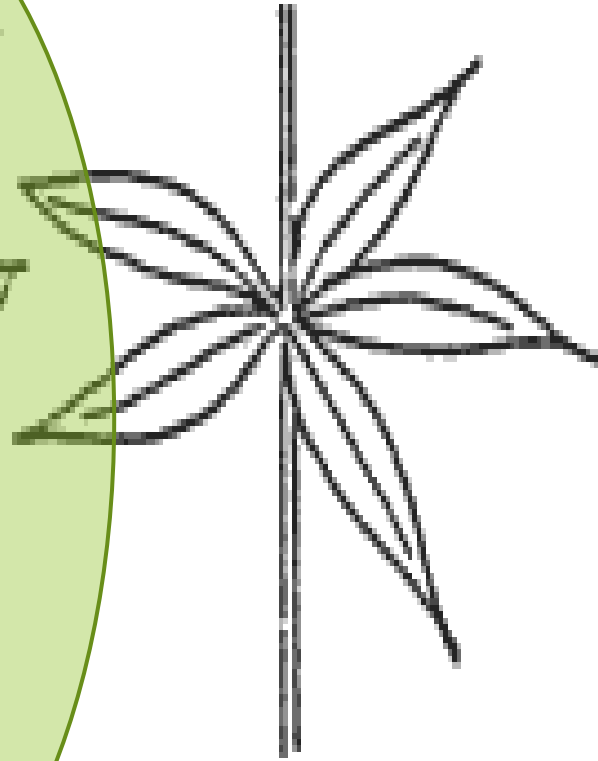
# Branching structure



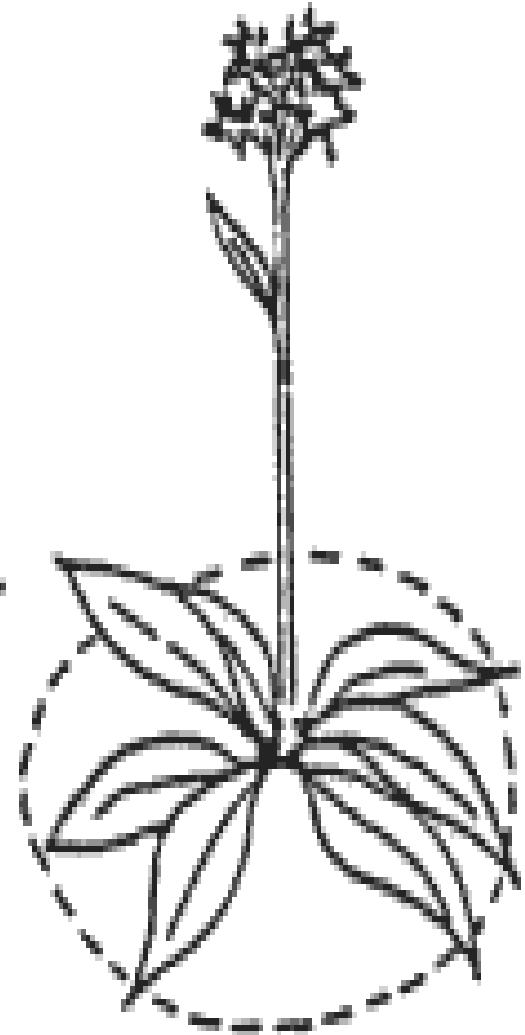
Opposite



Alternate

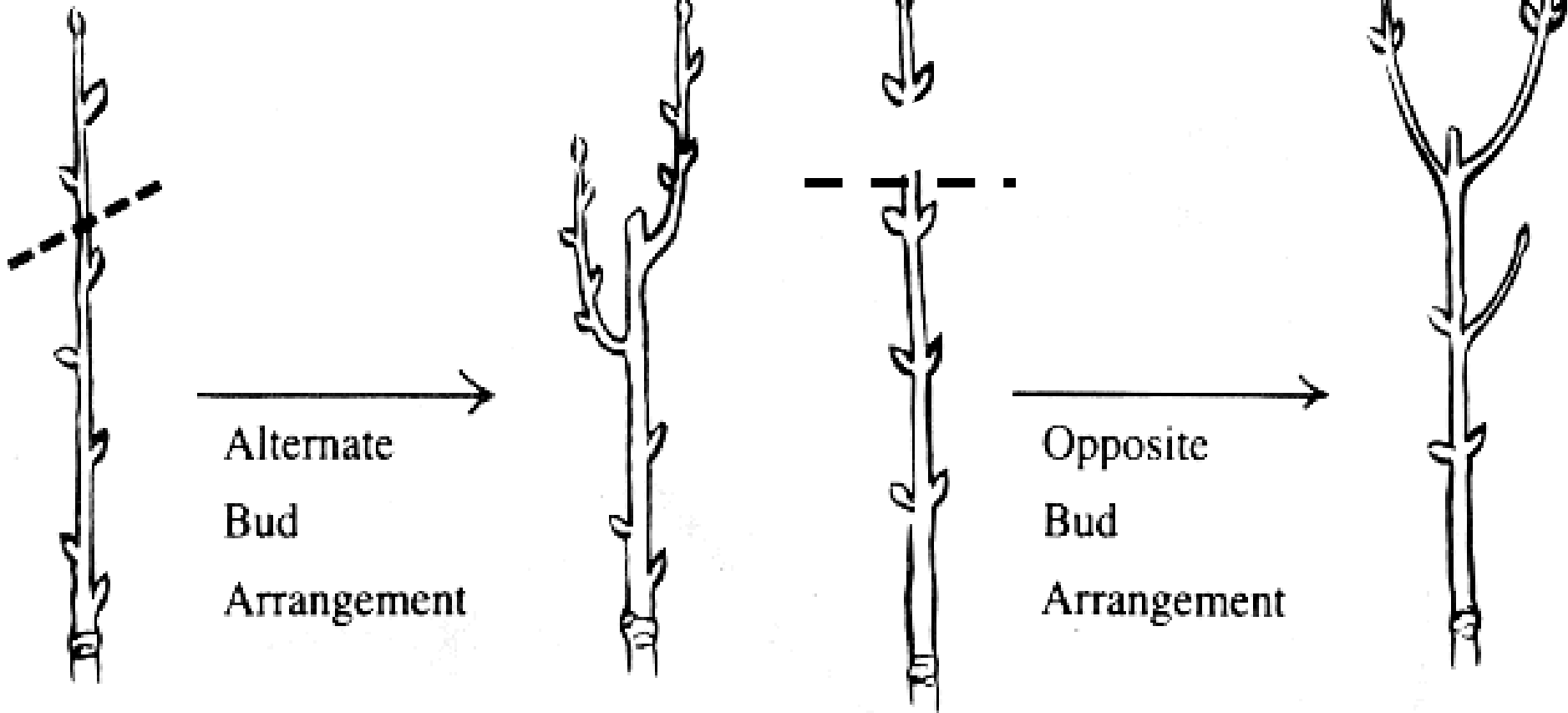


Whorled



Basal

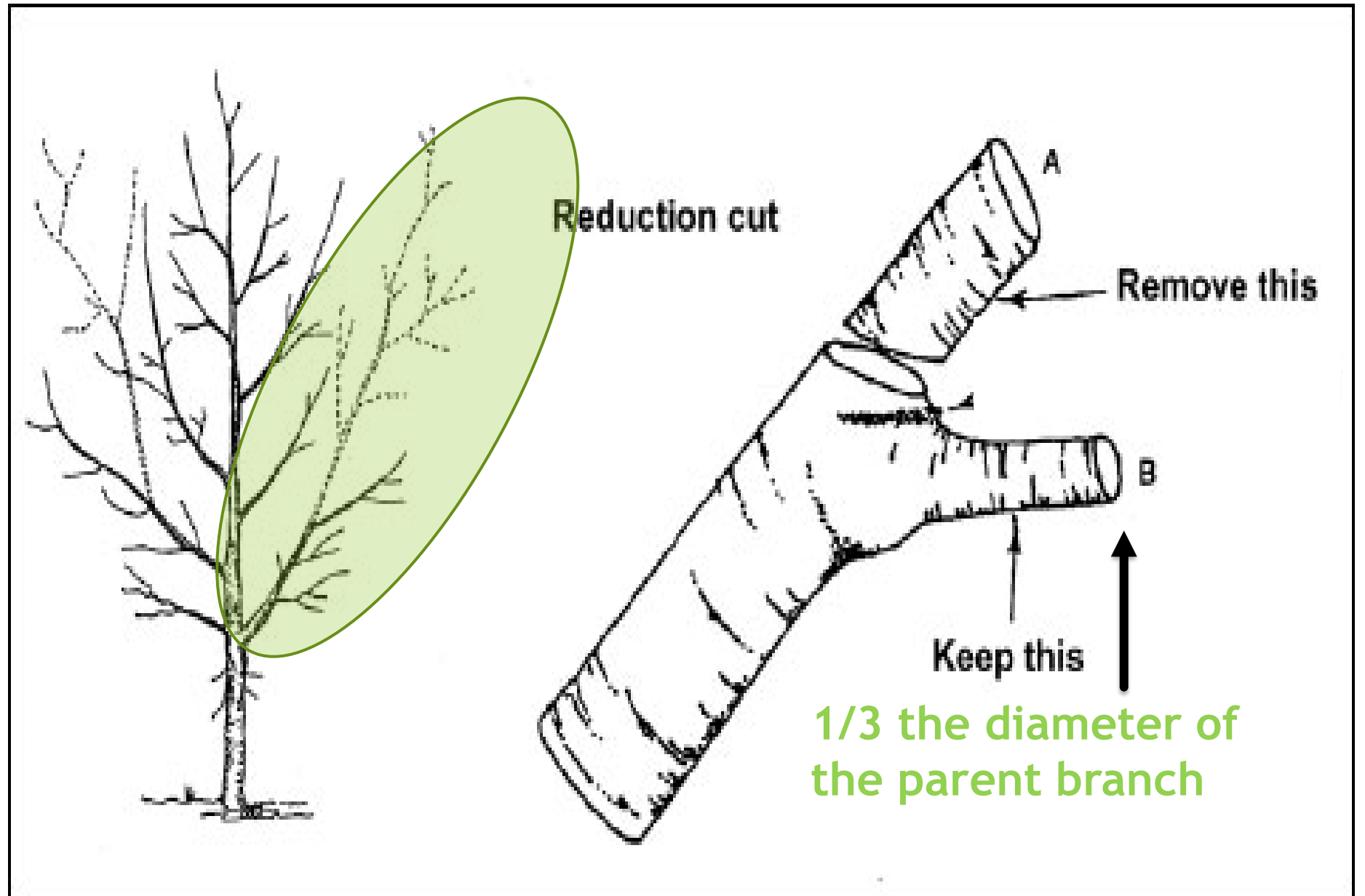
# Branching structure



Pruning stimulates lateral branch growth **close to the cut.**

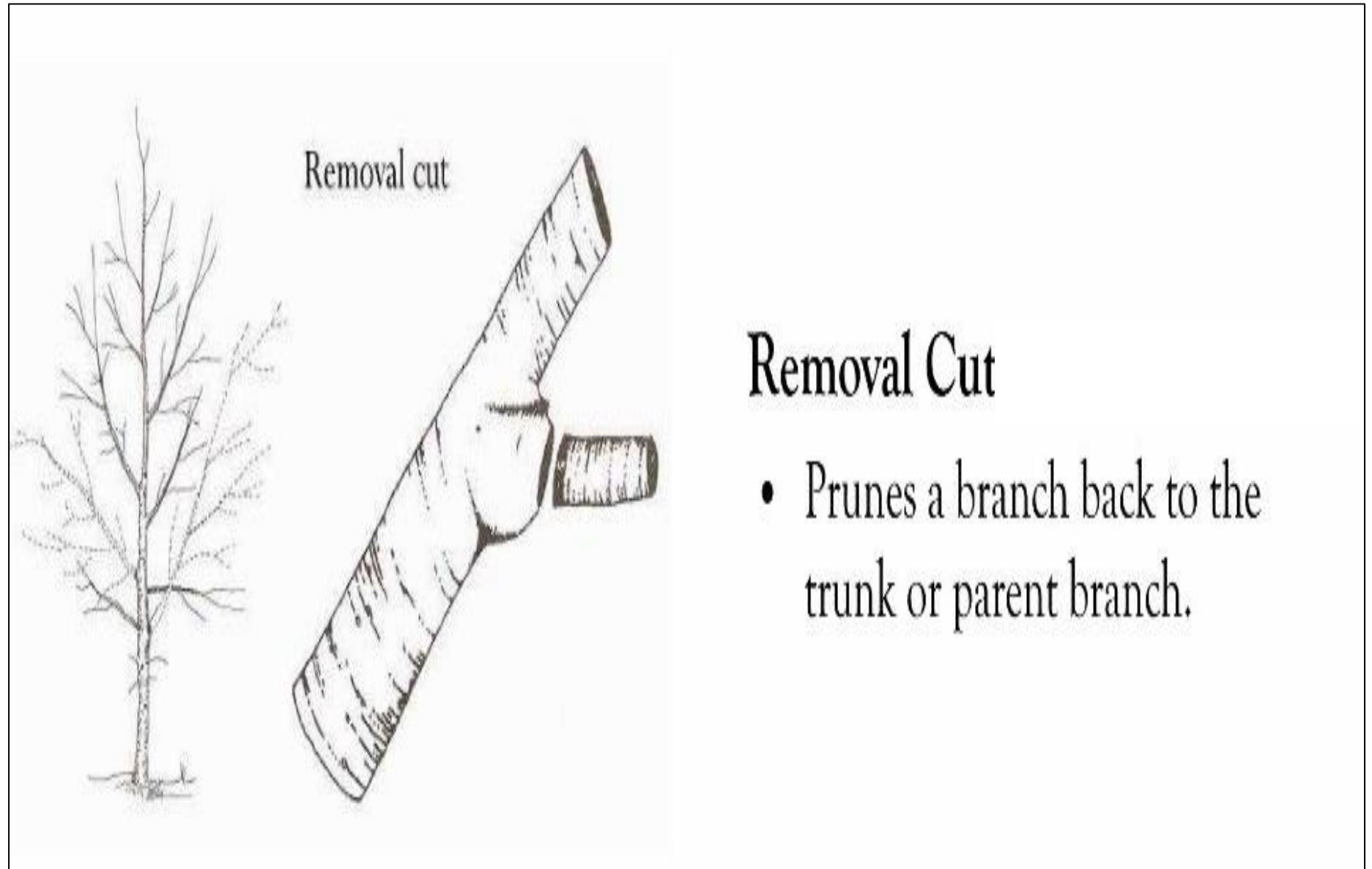
# Reduction Cut

Used to shorten a branch



# Removal Cut

Used to thin out the shrub



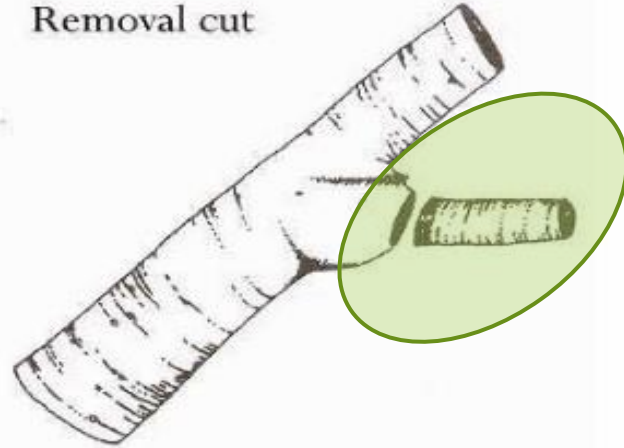
## Removal Cut

- Prunes a branch back to the trunk or parent branch.



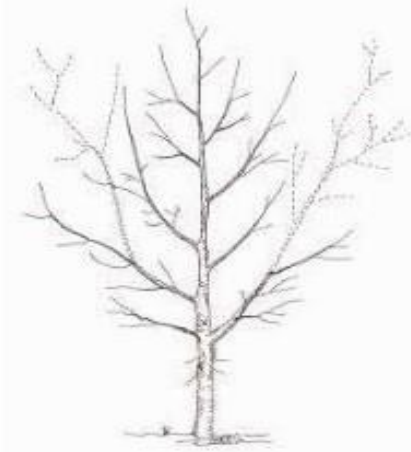


Removal cut

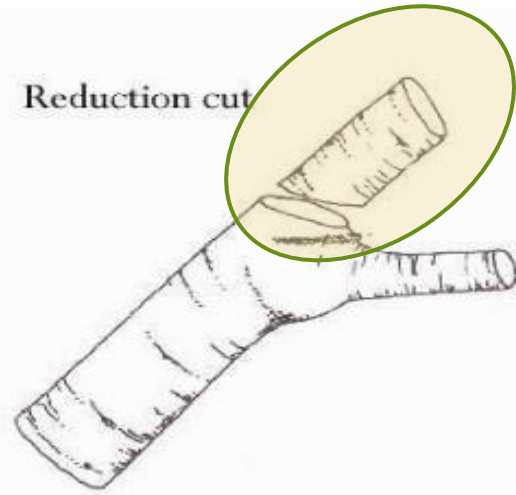


## Removal Cut

- Prunes a branch back to the trunk or parent branch.



Reduction cut



## Reduction Cut

- Shortens the length of a stem by pruning back to a smaller limb.

# Pruning Budget

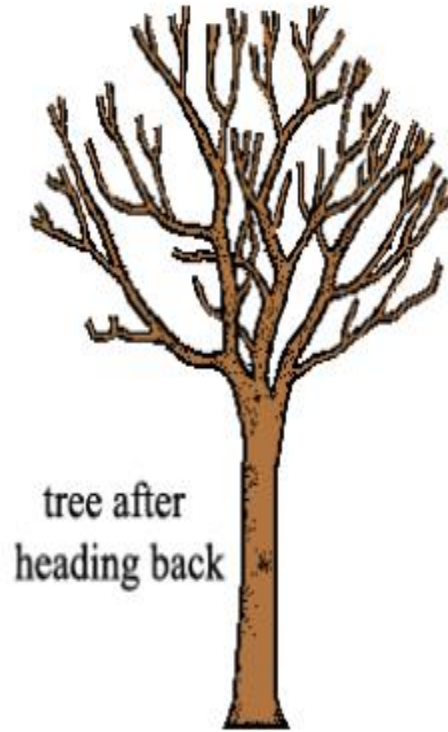
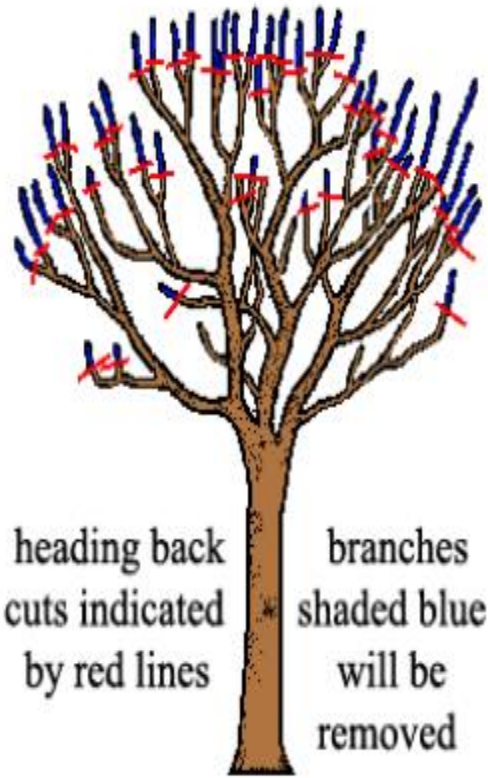
- ▶ Varies from plant and type
  - Kind of cut (reduction spends more than removal)
  - Size of cut (big spends more)
  - Total amount of foliage removed

# Natural vs sheared





# Non-selective heading cuts





















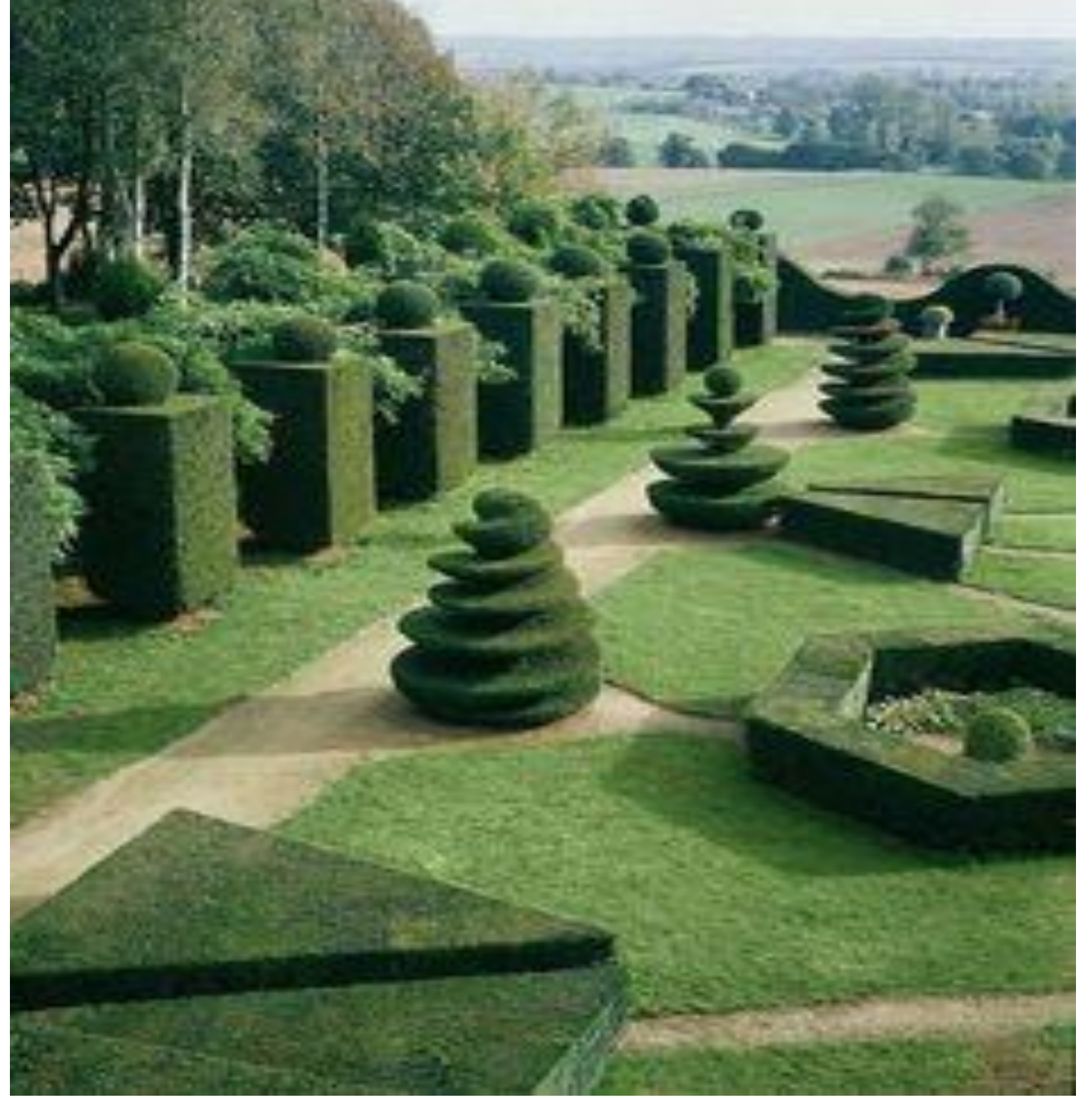


# Shearing when done correctly

Topiary

Hedges

Modern designs





# Plant Growth Habit

Cane



Tree-like

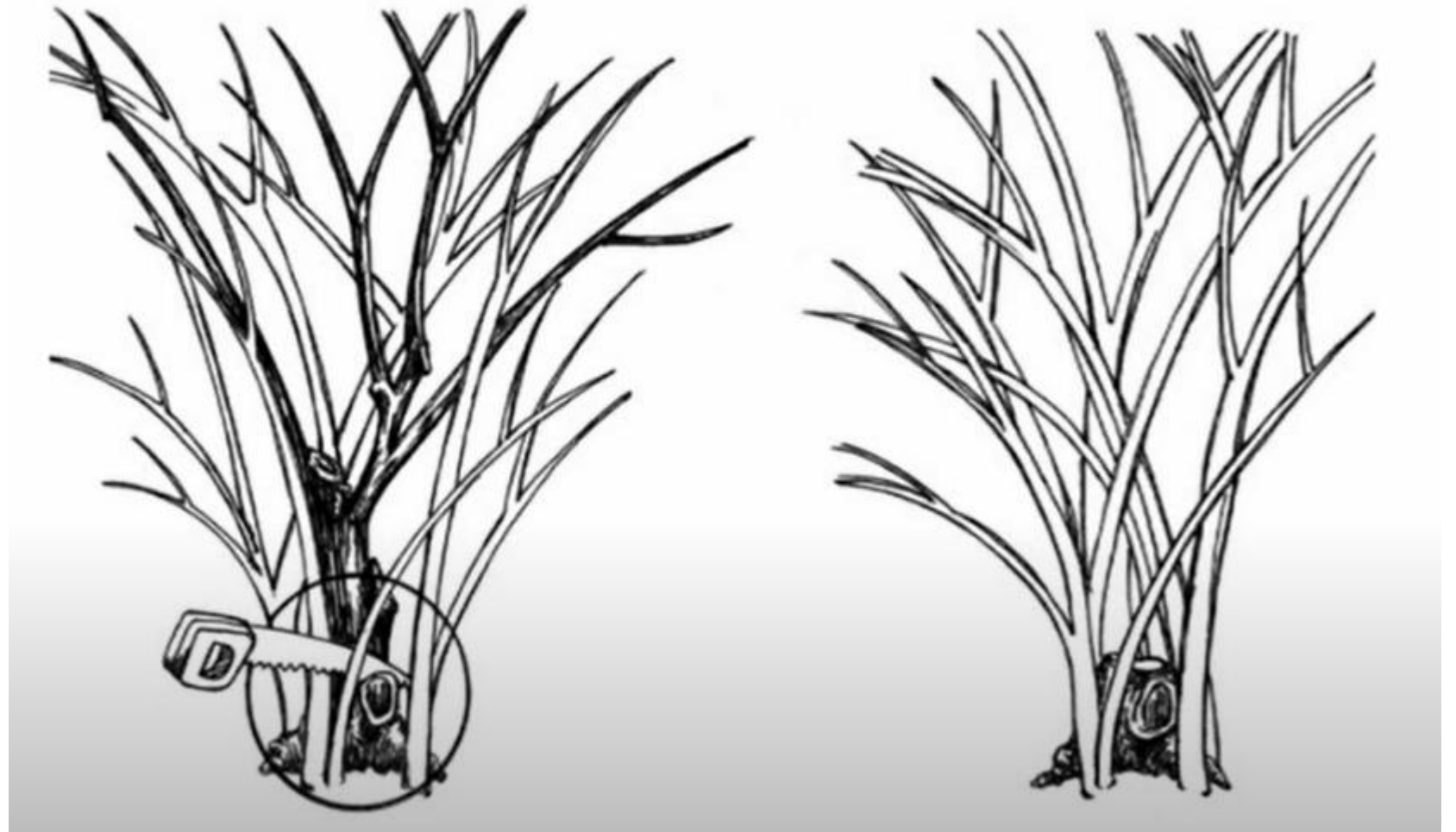


Mounding



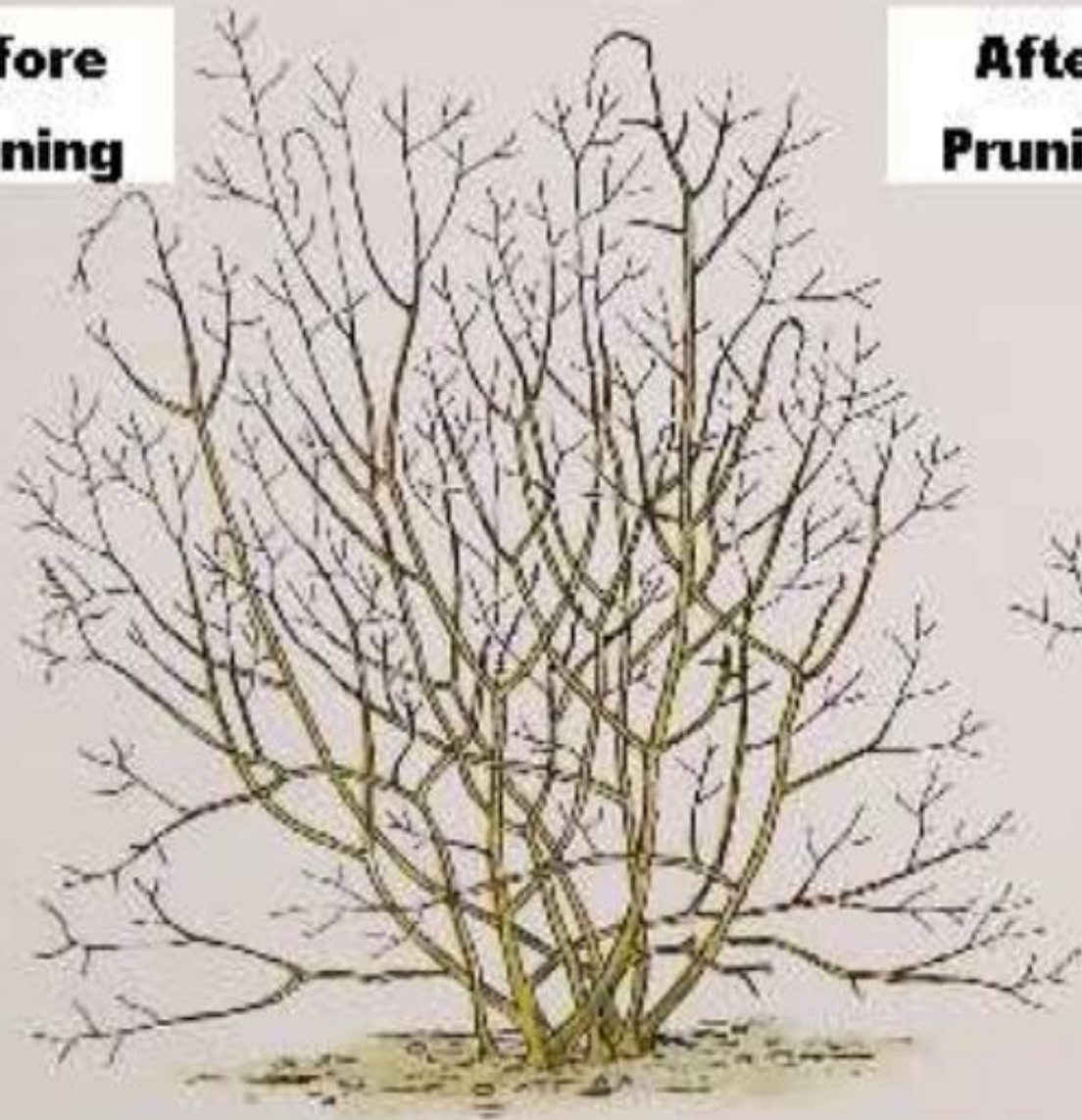
# Pruning Cane-growing Shrubs

- ▶ Cane thinning
- ▶ Rejuvenation





**Before  
Pruning**



**After  
Pruning**



# Pruning Tree-like Shrubs

- ▶ Thin
- ▶ Limb-up
- ▶ Clean up









# Arborizing

- ▶ Turn a shrub into a tree-like structure





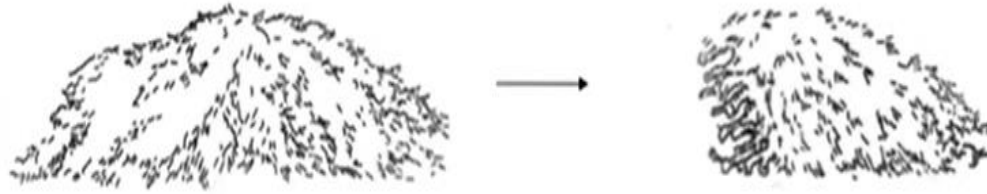


# Pruning Mounding Shrubs

- ▶ Grab and snip



# Lift and remove





# Indian Plum

Removal cuts to thin out canes

Reduction cuts to stiffen  
branches





## Red-twig Dogwood

Grab and snip to clean up  
shape





# Japanese Maple

Deadwooded

Removed crossing, wrong way branches

Removal cuts to thin out as needed

Limbed up lower branches









# Fool the Eye









# Rhododendrons

Height and width reduction difficult to achieve without annual pruning.

Things to consider

- Deadwood
- Limb up
- Enlarge bed and under plant
- Always cut above a dormant bud

Some times can do a radical renovation—cut down to 1-3” to ground and let it regrow.





# Hydrangea

- No need to prune if no problems
- Selective pruning to control as needed
- Remove deadwood
- Worst of crossing/rubbing canes
- Remove cane lying on ground or touching structures
  
- Radical Reno
  - Cut to 3-6" above ground
  - Will grow back to original size
  - Will be floppier b/c stems are newer





## Viburnum davidii

- Need little pruning
- Gets about 4'x5'
- Grab and snip
- Lift and snip
- Radical reno (spring)





# Oregon Grape

Cane grower-vertical type

Thin canes to ground

Head canes-cut to a leaflet

Or cut all canes to ground to  
reset plant





# Japanese Holly

- Mound grower
- Small leaves
- Prune for hgt control, but if fits in space leave alone
- Grab and snip
- Slant upwards-front & back
- Don't head-remember to cut to a node





# Sasanqua Camelia

Very prunable

Blooms in winter

Floppy—prune to control

Grab and snip to thin layers





# Witch Hazel

## Habit

- Winter bloomer, fragrant
- 15-20” tall and wide

## Pruning

- Site correctly
- Easy does it; subj to water sprouting
- After flowering, before summer
- Mostly removal cuts (thinning)
- Prune suckers





# Double-file Viburnum

## Habit

Tree-like; Spring bloomer;  
water sprout easily

## Pruning

- Most pruning needs b/c planted in the wrong place
- Cannot control width of plant
- Thinning, reshaping right after blooming
- Limb up lowest branches
- Always remove suckers





# Pieris

## Habit

- Tree-like; tidy, evergreen
- 12' x 10'
- Trouble free

## Pruning

- Moderate thinning (25% of foliage)
- Deadwood lots
- Avoid size reduction
- Gentle reduction



# Review

1. What is your pruning goal
2. How does the plant grow
3. Is it a flowering plant and when did it last flower
4. What is the pruning budget or—how much to cut out
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