



## Rewild Pruning Guide

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### Pruning philosophy

To understand plant care is to understand how we are connected to plants. Plants, especially native plants, are not just a setting, or a beautiful backdrop, but a part of the living world that is tied to us intrinsically. We must create a relationship with them and their deep and complex living qualities. We must learn to recognize the signs and learn to imagine what will the plant do if I cut it this way?

### Why prune

1. Plant has materials to be removed (dead materials, disease/pests, energy flow, aeration)
2. Redirecting the plant's growth
3. Aesthetic
4. Fuel management
5. Annual: all done, want to cut senescence (dead parts) back!
6. Harvest

### When to prune

#### Basic When to Prune:

1. For species that flower in early spring:
  - a. Prune in September at least 2-4 weeks before rain (How to Cut Page 5)
2. For species that flower in fall or late winter
  - a. Prune in spring before flowering (*Artemisia californica*)
3. For species that go dormant
  - a. Prune during dormancy

#### Holistic When to Prune

1. Pruning is an art! See nature's pruning (Page 5)



2. Consider the plant's Life Cycle (phenology)
  - a. Where is the plant putting its energy?
    - i. Growth, reproduction (flower/seeds), dormant?
      1. This is why you shouldn't purchase flowering plants. They are putting their energy into flowers, not roots.
  - b. Pruning dictates where the plant puts its energy
3. Times to prune
  - a. When the plant has stopped flowering
  - b. When you want to stop growth
  - c. When you want to encourage growth of a specific part of the plant
    - i. For example, to keep the plant suspended in a juvenile form of growth, pinch off the flowers. This will keep the plant plastic (so when it is placed in the ground, it is at a perfect stage to send down the roots)
  - d. When the plant is dormant
    - i. This is not to be confused with a plant that is stressed!
    - ii. Our native species are eco-dormant, meaning they respond to environmental factors and go dormant in hot and dry conditions
  - e. During September
    - i. Most native species have gone dormant and aren't expending energy on growth or flowering
    - ii. The chance of rain is incredibly low
4. Not times to prune
  - a. peak growth stage
  - b. flowering
  - c. During a rainy/wet season (for sage scrub species)
    - i. Dormant species in winter should be pruned then
  - d. When the plant is first planted
5. What part of the plant to prune
  - a. young growth/nodes in plants is full of growth hormones that help it adapt to change (see Plant Parts)
  - b. Older cuts can be made but understand it could be taking off more than the plant can handle
    - i. A deep prune like this can be done for less woody species (sage scrub species) every 3-5 years if needed
    - ii. Woody species may not be able to handle this kind of cut, so every year pruning small amounts to direct shape of plant is very important

## How to prune

1. The plant is alive and pruning affects its life. It will respond and react to how you choose to care for it.
2. Pruning materials
  - a. Sharp loppers or prunings
    - i. Your tool should cut one clean cut (not lots of saw marks or bends)



- b. Isopropyl alcohol to sanitize your tools
- 3. Cut at a 45 degree angle just above a node in one go (How to Cut Page 5)
  - a. When you take the apical or upward growth of a plant, it tells the plant to grow outward, and bushier
  - b. All of the nodes are going to initiate growth during its growing season, so you will want to prune the plant equally to encourage balance in the plants shape
  - c. Long internodes can cause rot, so cut close to the node

## How much to prune

- 1. This will vary depending on the plant
  - a. Semi woody: you can cut quite close to the ground → try to not take more than 30% of plant (again deep prunes can be made every handful of years)
    - i. Sage, buckwheat, coyote brush
  - b. Woody: be very careful, these plants are slow growing and sensitive → no more than 30%
    - i. Ribes, barberry
  - c. Woody sensitive: cut no more than 10-20%
    - i. Ceanothus, manzanita
  - d. Woody vs nonwoody → dead cell create a structure

## FAQs

- 1. How long do native plants live
  - a. Plant life expectancy → so dependent on the plant, if its dead within 2-3 years, it's probably not the life expectancy
  - b. If it died and is surrounded by its offspring → life expectancy
  - c. No offsprings and dead → you probably killed it
- 2. Do I need to balance my pruning
  - a. Not necessary for all plants
  - b. Balance necessary: trees, large shrubs
    - i. Manzanita, sycamore, oak, ceanothus
  - c. Not necessary: grasses, small shrubs
    - i. Grasses, sages
- 3. Do I need to fertilize my native plants?
  - a. No!
- 4. What does yellowing leaves mean?
  - a. Yellow leaves can mean a few different things, but it indicates that the plant is not happy.
  - b. The most common problem is overwatering. Check the moisture in the soil. If it's wet, slowly reduce water. Do not cut back water extremely.
  - c. Crispy leaves are underwatering
- 5. Should I water my native plants during a heat wave?
  - a. Water 1 week before a heat wave. Give plants a deep water.



- b. Watering during a heat wave can be stressful for the plant → if you need to water do it in the middle of the night
  - c. Try to establish plants on a plan to wean them off water. Never give a plant a lot of water during stress if it is not used to it, or cut watering to a plant that is used to it
6. When should I plant a native plant
- a. The best time to plant is 3 days before rain (usually November, December, or January). Plant 2 inches. No watering may ever be necessary.
  - b. The second best time to plant is in late February or March. Plants will likely require occasional water in the spring and fall.
  - c. The worst, but still doable time to plant is in late spring. Plants will require monthly watering
  - d. Never plant during summer or fall

## Rewild Garden Calendar

Fall: prune any dead material in early Fall, plant and seed in late Fall

Winter: plant, supplemental watering every few weeks if there is no rain, weed

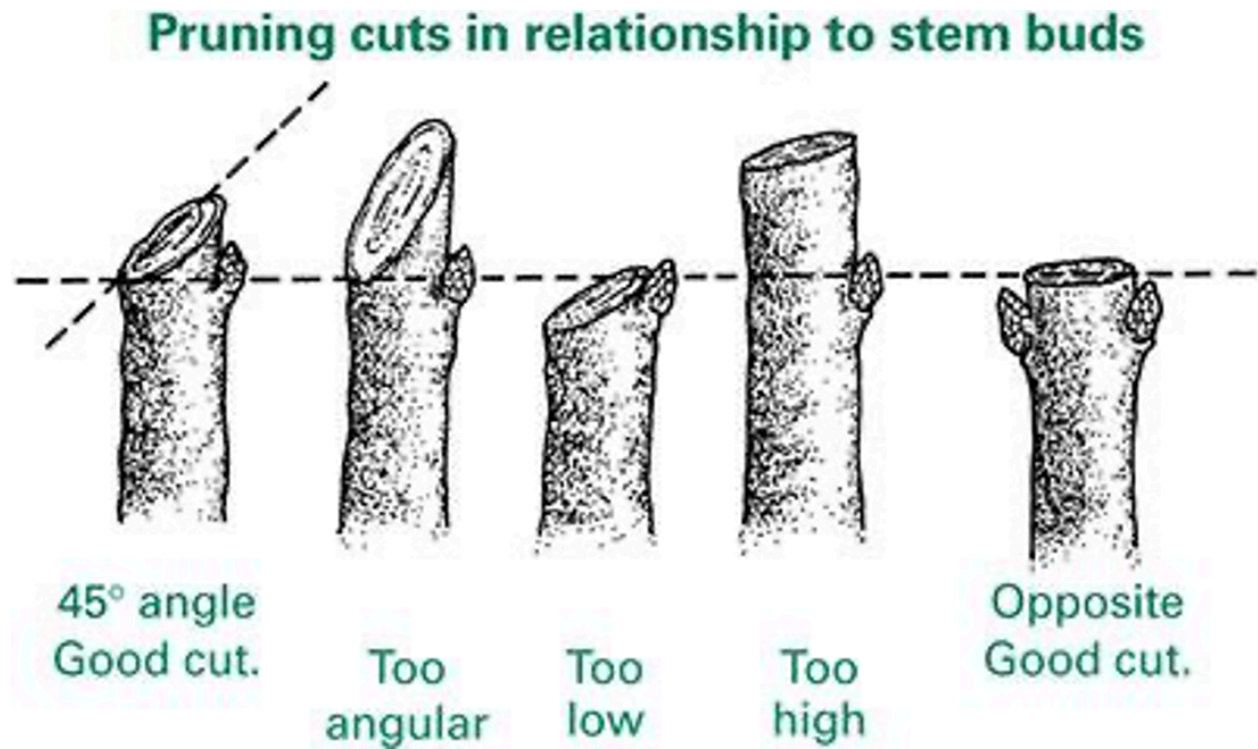
Spring: supplemental watering every few weeks if there is no rain, but reduce frequency, weed

Summer: let the plants go dormant, reduce water for new plants and stop watering completely for established plants, weed



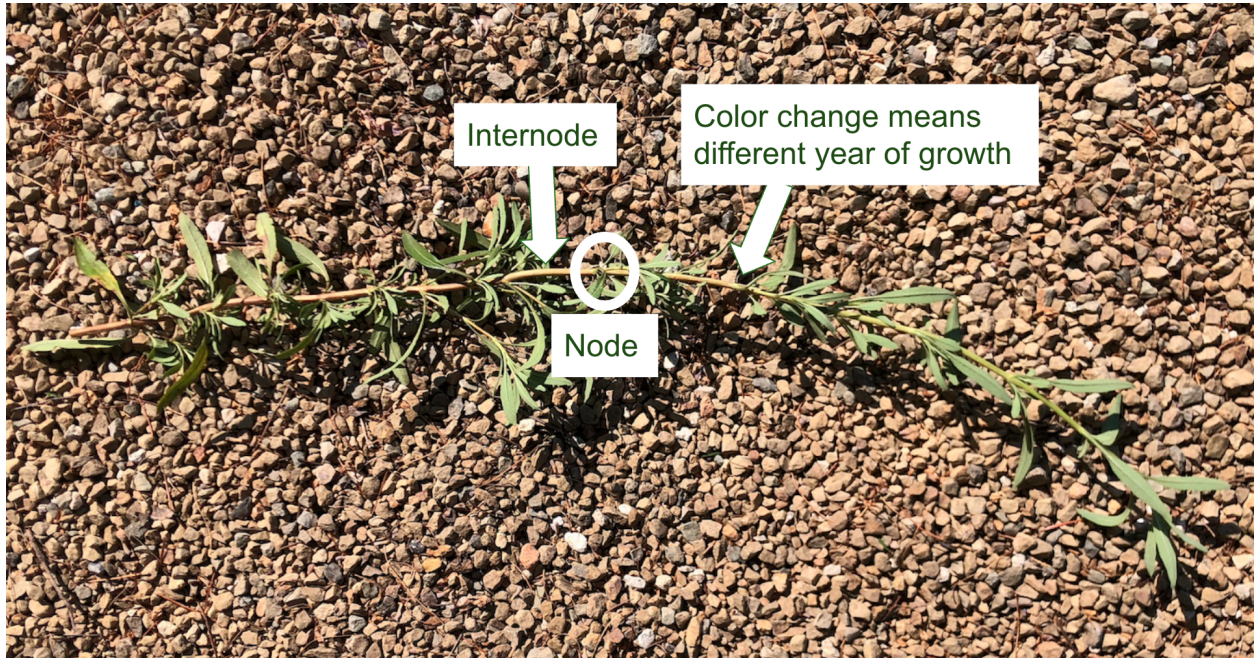
## Diagrams

How to cut





## Plant Parts





## Nature's Pruning



Pruned by sun and wind





Pruned by river– large fallen trees then put out new growth and shoots



Pruned by fire