

Pruning Native Plants by Gloria Sheather (November 2006)

To Prune or not to Prune?

Australian plants are no different to exotic plants when it comes to pruning and many respond well when pruning is carried out. In the bush many are naturally **pruned by wildlife** such as kangaroos and wallabies.

Flower production is usually increased quite dramatically after pruning. Some short-lived plants can have their lives extended by pruning. Increased foliage density resulting from pruning allows better protection for **wildlife**, also nesting sites for our smaller birds. Desired form and shape can be controlled by judicious pruning.

Micro Pruning: Constant tip pruning is probably the best for many plants. This is carried out by pinching out the tips by holding them between the forefinger and thumb. It is advisable to begin this method while the plants are seedlings or rooted cuttings and continued after planting. This usually provides a good framework and some plants will not require heavier pruning later.



Macro Pruning: Most Australian natives flower on **new wood**. This heavier pruning is usually carried out in late spring after flowering has finished, cutting behind the spent flowers.

There are some plants that flower on **old wood** and care must be taken otherwise they will not flower for some time, eg *Calothamnus*.

Hedges require light pruning to maintain shape.

If in doubt whether a plant can handle pruning or not then cut back **only half** the plant. Responses by the plant will determine if the remainder can be pruned.

Very heavy pruning, **coppicing**, that is the removal of plant growth just above ground level, can be carried out particularly for eucalypts. Those with a lignotuber respond best. Not all eucalypts respond positively and it is best to check before pruning.

Acacia: Light

Banksia: Light

Calothamnus: Light pruning but not into old wood

Callistemon: Moderate behind flower heads

Calytrix: Light

Correa: Light

Dodonea: Most respond well but not into old wood

Eriostemon: Light

Eremophila: Light

Eucalyptus: Tip prune if more lateral branches are required. Coppicing for mallee effect

Grevillea: Light to heavy depends on species. Parrots love their seeds so leave some branches unpruned

Hakea: Light to moderate if required

Kunzea: Light to moderate

Leptospermum: Most respond to light pruning

Melaleuca: Moderate to heavy depending on species

Myoporum: Light pruning. *Myoporum floribundum* do not prune into leafless wood

Olearia: Light but not into leafless wood

Prostantheras: Light but not into leafless wood.
