

## Pruned evergreens used for decorations

**MEDIA** - Many people like to lightly prune their evergreens in early to mid-December to get greens for holiday decorations. Properly done, this can provide needed greens and at the same time benefit the plants, point out experts.

The objectives of this light pruning are to improve a plant's symmetry and natural form, to promote better balanced and healthier growth, and to give limited control of height or spread of the plant. One should always make the pruning cut at a joint in a branch so that the remaining leaves cover and hide the cut. Both needle and broadleaf evergreens make attractive Christmas decorations. To make arrangements, a few branches that are 12 to 15 inches long may be needed, but the majority of materials for both centerpieces and wreaths need to be no longer than 4 to 6 inches. One can get the larger pieces by removing unwanted branches and by severe heading back of vigorous growth. Foundation plantings, for example, should have an air space between each other and between each plant and the house. This often requires the removal or hard pruning of some branches

Doing such pruning now is a good way for a person to get the longer greens.

Short pieces of plant material are obtained by a type of pruning called "tipping". This, as the name suggests, is the removal of the top of the shoot. Done with a pair of hand shears or a pruning knife, tipping should provide all the four to six inch pieces of greenery needed for decorating, leaving a very natural-looking plant in the process. Tipping done with a pair of electric hedge shears may give green, but it also produces the unnaturally shaped plant mounds that sometimes appear in the front yards of homeowners who don't understand how to prune.

Any evergreen can be used for Christmas greenery, but some kinds are better than others. Boxwood with its dense, fine texture, is especially popular. Japanese hollies are a good substitute, and American English and Chinese hollies are excellent for the purpose. And, of course, they have desirable red berries. Of the pines, the fine, flexible, bright green needles of the white pine are best. Other pines are also satisfactory. Spruces make

excellent wreaths: the Colorado spruce holds its needles much better than the Norway. Hemlock does not hold its needles well. If used in an arrangement where the stems will be in water this should be no problem.

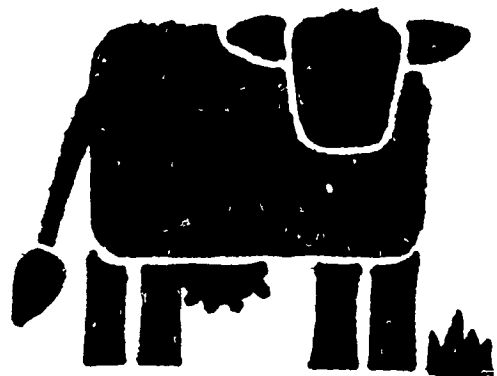
In pruning the larger evergreens such as pine, spruce and hemlock, one should get the greens by removing unneeded branches. Both pine and hemlock will respond to tipping, but use more care with the spruces and don't over-prune. On older trees it's possible to remove or tip side

shoots without spoiling the plant's basic symmetry. Both yews and junipers are good sources of greenery, too. The dark green needles of yew are especially good and the plants tolerate pruning well.

Even rhododendrons can be pruned now for holiday decorations. One should prune them back to force branches and leave a clean, smooth cut. Many rhododendrons need pruning anyway to keep them in scale with their setting and to keep them compact. A person should avoid

removing branches with flower buds if there's concern about the number of blooms next Spring. When using any greens for decorations, one should be aware of the potential fire hazard of these materials, and remember that those

greens which are kept in water will last much longer. When using greens without water, one should avoid burning candles near them, and also keep them away from heaters, electric lights, television sets and other sources of heat.



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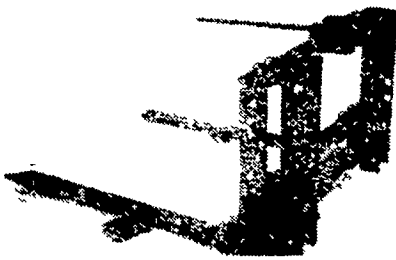
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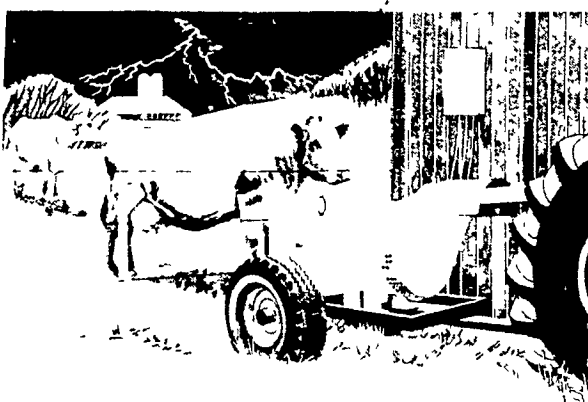
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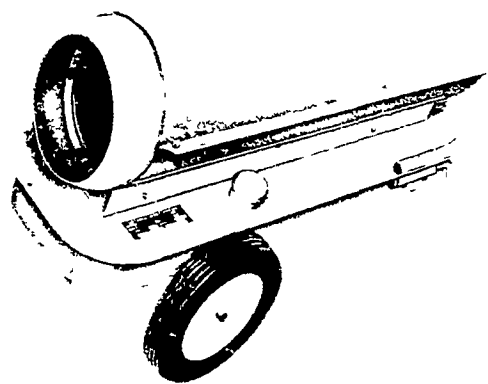
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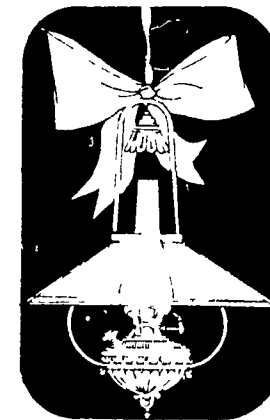
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