



Selling Pruning Tools

LESSON OBJECTIVE: Review the differences between the four basic types of pruning tools in preparation for the fall.

ESTIMATED COMPLETION TIME: Approximately 5 minutes for the PDF. Use the Additional Discussion section to spend more time on this topic.

HOW TO USE: The lesson includes a PDF which you can use similar to the way you would use a PowerPoint presentation. The trainer's notes will offer notes for each slide, but you may elaborate on each as much as you wish.

Slide 1 - Introduction

For most trees and shrubs, fall is the best time to prune back the branches. There are several reasons to prune. Some of those include getting rid of dead branches, controlling the shape of the tree, providing clearance for electrical wire or reducing shade around the tree.

Slide 2 - Four Types of Pruning Tools

When customers come into the store looking for the tools they need for pruning, it's important we know which ones to recommend. Today, we're going to look at four common tools used in pruning: the anvil pruner, bypass pruner, lopper and pruning saw.

Slide 3 - Anvil Pruner

The anvil pruner has one straight blade that gets pushed up against a flat, soft, metal anvil surface. It cuts like a knife, crushing the material as it cuts through it. Use it where having a clean cut is not important.

The anvil pruner is best for grunt work; getting rid of dried or dead wood. Some experts believe that evergreens prefer this type of cut. However, generally you do not use them on live branches.

Slide 4 - Bypass Pruner

Bypass pruners have a hook-and-blade cutting action. The blade sweeps past the jaw like scissors. This offers a cleaner cut than does an anvil pruner.

The bypass pruner is the type preferred by most professionals trimming live plants, such as shrubs, bushes and flowers because they cut close to the stem. They can also cut larger branches up to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in diameter. It's important that this pruner be kept sharp because the cuts it makes will affect the health of the plant. Do not use with dead branches, as they can jam up the blade.

Slide 5 - Lopper

The lopper is essentially a long-handled version of either the anvil or bypass pruner. They come in both styles. Because they have long handles, they offer more leverage. Some even have extension handles for a farther reach.

Use this type of pruner on small bushes and trees up to 3 inches in diameter, depending on the size of the blade.

Slide 6 - Pruning Saw

The pruning saw is a saw designed for cutting trees. There are a variety of styles. Some have a pistol grip like the one shown here. Some have a folding blade for easy storage.

Use a pruning saw on branches larger than 1 inch in diameter. It can be used on live or dead wood. Another item commonly used for this size of branch is a bow saw.

Slide 7 - Upselling

When you are selling pruning tools, there are a few features that you can suggest for customers who want a better tool.

- Lightweight materials such as fiberglass are easier to handle, especially when customers are using them for extended periods of time.
- Ergonomic handles can make these tools easier to use.
- Some loppers might have a compound mechanical action. This increases the cutting force of the lopper. This might be especially nice for seniors who need a tool that is easier to use.
- A lopper with a ratcheting action also uses a mechanical action to make it easier to cut large branches with minimal force.



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Slide 8 - Add-On Sales

Here are some of the other items customers might need when using a pruning tool.

- Garden gloves will help protect their hands when working with brush and branches.
- Suggest a lubricating oil to protect against rust and keep the blade working smoothly.
- Recommend a sharpener for keeping the blade sharp.

Slide 9 - Closing comments

These are the basics you need to know to start selling pruning tools. Make sure you know where these are in the store so you can take customers directly to them when they ask.

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION:

Review these frequently asked questions about pruning trees and shrubs.

When should I prune?

Typically, it's best to do this trimming when the plant is dormant before it is budding. For most common hardwood shade trees, like maples, late fall and winter is the perfect time, after most of the leaves have fallen. One benefit of pruning right before the leaves fall is that you can easily tell the live limbs from dead ones. For flowering, fruit and ornamental trees, many times the best time to prune is during the growing season.

Are there tree trimmers you can use from the ground?

Yes, pole tree trimmers typically extend 12 to 20 feet. Shears with a pulley and rope can cut about a 1 inch diameter branch, and saws are used on branches up to about 6 inches. For these and larger branches you may want to consider a chain saw.

How do I take care of my pruning tools?

Simply keep them clean and wipe them down with light oil. Oil their pivot points and blades with general purpose lubricating oil and sharpen them if need be. Also apply rust remover as needed.