

Training and Grooming Houseplants

This includes a number of minor care activities that distinguish the beginner from the more experienced house plant grower. Pinching is one of them. Pinching is the removal of 1 inch or less of new stem and leaf growth. When it is necessary, pinch to just above the node. This leaves the plant attractive and stimulates new growth. It can be a one-time or continuous activity, depending on the need and the desires of the plant owner. If a plant should be kept compact, but well filled out, frequent pinching will achieve this. Pruning is a similar activity.



1. Leggy plant needs to grow bushier, keep more compact form.



2. Pinch out growing tip of tallest stem, removing it close to leaf joint.



3. New growth forms just below pinched-out tip, makes plant bushy.

Pruning includes removal of other than terminal shoot tips. Sometimes an entire branch or section of a plant should be removed for the sake of appearance. Disbudding is another related care activity. Certain flower buds are removed either to obtain larger blooms from a few choice buds or to eliminate flowering of a very young plant or recently rooted cutting that should not bear the physical drain of flowering early. Ivies and hoyas, as well as philodendron and syngonium, are frequently grown in a formal pattern. This can be easily achieved by training them on trellises. It is important to keep plants clean and neat. It not only improves the appearance of plants but reduces the incidence of insects and disease problems. Remove all spent flowers, dying leaves, and dead branches. Keep leaves dust free by washing plants with warm water and mild soap (cover pot to prevent soap from entering the soil). If tips of leaves become brown and dry, trim them off neatly with sharp scissors. Removal of alkali deposits at the soil surface and replacement with clean soil does more for appearance than for the plant itself.