

Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

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If a tree is pruned, the style in which it is pruned becomes another ornamentation. One of the most fascinating styles is pollarding, an age-old pruning technique supposedly originated in Holland, adding drama and beauty to winter stems. It was used to harvest firewood for heating and saplings for wooden shoes without killing the tree. Today it is utilized mostly on city trees to contain size but when done consistently, the tree becomes an art piece. With pollarding, a gardener cuts back the main limbs of the tree. In the spring, new shoots grow below the cuts and are then removed. After a few of these heavy cuttings, gnarly stubs form at the top of the tree. A pollarded tree must continue to be pollarded every year to two years otherwise it risks developing weak shoots that push against one another allowing moisture to enter the wood which eventually rots and kills the tree. Some trees that are commonly pollarded include locust, linden, willow, redbud, mulberry, beech, horsechestnut, and poplars. A great place to enjoy pollarded trees is in the band concourse between the Academy of Arts and Sciences and the de Young Museum in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. They eerily remind one of a haunted forest where the trees awaken, talk, and follow the traveler.

Before all the leaves spring forth in your home forest, take a walk outside with



The knots and gnarls of a pollarded tree is reminiscent of a haunted forest.



Who can resist the shimmering clusters of brilliant blooms of the Golden Chain tree?

Photos Cynthia Brian

your camera to snap the anatomy of a bare tree. Look for interesting pruning techniques as you drive the suburban roads, and savor the fragrance of the fruit trees in blossom.

Branch out!