

LA County Arboretum Plumeria Grove
Self-guided Walking Tour #10
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Why do We Prune Plumeria?

All plumeria trees should be pruned. It's more than a cosmetic issue – when done properly, the tree's vigor improves. But like everything else in the plumeria world, how you prune depends on the variety.

Rules of thumb to consider before you touch the tree.

- Plumeria bloom on new tips: more tips, more flowers.
- Prune in the spring, just as the trees are pushing out new growth. This gives the tree time to produce new branches.
- Don't prune more than a 1/3 of the tree if you want flowers that year
- Leave a residual stub of at least 6-8" – it will produce new branches from the cut end.
- Cut at the base of the branch, at a swelling called the collar, to prevent new branches from forming. This is useful to keep branches off the ground or from crossing. It's also why theft damages trees so badly – by tearing one off the tree, no new branches grow.

Every spring, a volunteer team evaluates each tree and prunes certain branches. Reasons we prune each tree:

- improve the overall shape for landscaping or aesthetics
- reduce the weight of long branches
- bring the flowering canopy lower
- force new branching
- propagate a one-of-a-kind variety for exchange with other botanical gardens

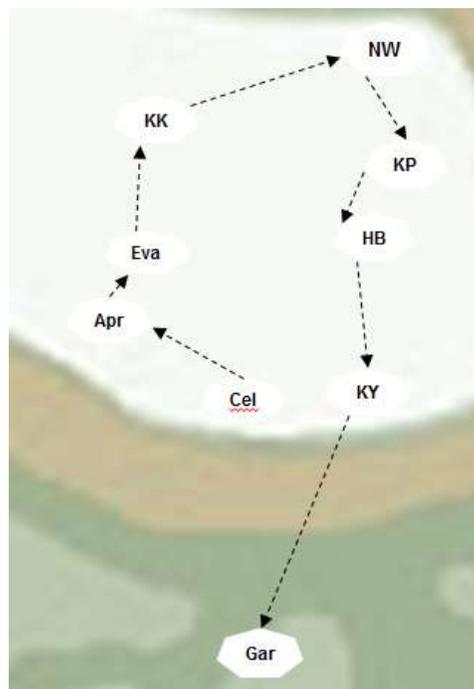
We do not, however, prune trees to produce cuttings for sale. The vast majority of the grove's trees are easily found in Southern California. Excess cuttings from our pruning efforts are donated to the South Coast Plumeria Society for raffles during their monthly meetings.

Please don't break off branches! Some plumeria are difficult to grow, and damaged trees die when uncaring visitors snap pieces off. An abused tree is sad sight, especially when plumeria are readily available in stores or from friends.

Know the Branching Habit before Pruning

Some trees produce more new branches than others after pruning. With well-known varieties like Celadine, we expect very good branching on the cut ends. Others, such as Hilo Beauty, do not branch at all, and the stub rots. Since there are quite a few No ID trees in the grove, we selectively prune each, and track from year to year how it responds. That way, we know in the future how to properly prune the tree.

- Shape and form: **Celadine** is a robust grower with an excellent growth habit. She gets minimal pruning to remove crossed branches.
- Bring a canopy down: **Apricot** is a rather tall, gangly grower, and we want the flowers at eye level. About a third of the overall canopy is trimmed to promote branching and bring the blooms lower.
- Plumerias produce flowers only on branch tips – more branches, more blooms! **Evalani** is selectively pruned every year to produce more branches, since she's an excellent brancher and responds with more tips.
- When horizontal growing trees become very wide, branches can snap from their own weight or during Santa Ana winds. **King Kalakaua**, an excellent brancher, is pruned to keep her dense.
- Remove crossed branches that rub against each other and damage the bark. **Nellie's White**, with her sprawling growth habit, tends to overlap new branches.
- You'll notice quite a few trees in the grove are partially pruned. On **Krystyna's Pink**, one branch is unpruned so you can see the difference for a tall tree.
- Some trees just hate to be pruned. **Hilo Beauty** is one – pruned branches die back.
- Some trees have very poor form, as you can see in **Keauhou Yellow**. It will take many years of selective pruning to improve the shape.
- Get the branches off the ground to prevent damage when weeding: **Gardena** is a dense, horizontal grower, and is pruned to improve her overall shape.



Take your time and stroll through the rest of our grove, and enjoy the many blooms. As more trees are planted, mature and bloom, this walking tour and other, more in-depth tours will be expanded. Enjoy!