

The earliest of gardening chores involves cleaning away the debris left behind by winter. The melting away of snow gives way to a real mess! It can feel much the same following a season of personal loss. We may feel overwhelmed by the aftermath of practical tasks as well as the many emotions that ensue.

In the garden, once the debris is cleared, it's time to prune. Pruning, at first glance, seems harsh and even brutal. By its very definition, it means to cut and remove not only dead parts of a plant, but also some of the living parts.

This Golden Barberry bush has been cut back to allow for growth in the new season.

The practice of pruning can leave the shrub or plant looking like all hope is lost. Indeed, to any passerby, this Golden Barberry (to the right) looks done for!

Who would ever believe that just six weeks later the Barberry would look like the picture below? Now anyone passing by can enjoy the color, contrast and interest this beauty brings to the landscape.

The science of gardening even uses special, surprising terms to describe this type of pruning: restorative and rejuvenating. This drastic cutting back of a living thing causes the plant to come back with amazing vigor, more beautiful than ever.

So, what has happened in the (unbelievably) short amount of time to evolve this Barberry shrub?

- Time
- Rest
- Healing
- Work
- Support
- Growth

The same bush that once appeared hopeless thrived after its pruning. This little garden has become a place where signs of new life are beginning and hope for the future emerges.



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The same bush that once appeared hopeless thrived after its pruning.

(continued on reverse)



When faced with life's losses and challenges, it's very easy to feel as though one is being cut to the quick, pruned. Illness, isolation, separation, even death—these events cause a sense of being severed from the structure of life as we once knew it. It may seem improbable, even impossible, that any beauty will emerge from such a season of pruning.

But, allowing for, and even striving for, the same principles applied to botanical pruning can eventually lead a person, whose spirit is wounded, to a season of growth:

- **Time** – There is an adage that “time heals all wounds.” Time alone cannot heal, but in combination with other key elements, it's essential.
- **Rest** – Grief can be accompanied by insatiable weariness and fatigue. It's important to recognize this is a time when additional rest is required.
- **Healing** – If a person suffered a fractured bone, no one would question that healing needs to take place. Even though no cast is visible, wounded emotions will also require healing.
- **Work** – We use the term, “grief work,” because it is work. So much can be learned and done to help oneself work through the season of grief.
- **Support** – Just as garden vines need physical supports to be upheld, grieving individuals can benefit from leaning on others. Sometimes support comes in the form of a trusted family member or friend. Other times, it may be an organized group or one-to-one time with a qualified professional.

This can be a season where signs of new life are beginning and hope for the future emerges. The human spirit is resilient and can even thrive through life's prunings!

Hospice of the Red River Valley welcomes the opportunity to help guide your journey from grief to hope. The organization's grief support program is a free community resource available to anyone who has experienced a loss through death, whether they had hospice services or not. If you or a loved one needs grief support, please contact us.



Hospice of the Red River Valley has many resources available for the public, on a loan basis, through the resource libraries in each of our offices. Topics include caregiving, terminal illness, dying, death, grief and loss. For more information about grief and loss, visit our website: www.hrrv.org or call us at (800) 237-4629.