

Shaping September

September is a funny month in the garden...

September in the garden means starting to think about the big, structural work, the hard cuts, the "take that whole branch out" decisions, the "has to wait until late winter when the plant is dormant and can cope with it" decisions...



But right now? Right now is the season for *light* pruning and shaping.

A trim here, a tidy there - just enough to let light in and encourage the right growth *before* things slow down for autumn. Sound familiar?

It's the same in the workplace. September, the post-summer/pre-Christmas crunch, is rarely the moment for a total organisational overhaul.

But it *is* the right moment to trim back what's obscuring the view, so that you (and everyone around you) can see the sign that was there all along.



Let's get into this month!!

In this edition, we have more on managing September, PLUS, we have some **exciting** announcements to share:

-  Launching: The HEAD Gardener Community
-  How pruning helps
-  How to choose what to let go of
-  The science of why letting go is hard
-  Quiz: Your September Shaping Check
-  More exciting announcements

And as always, consider this your seed packet: plant what's useful and compost the rest!

Launching: The HEAD Gardener Community



Growing with The HEAD Gardener

New event ...

Growing with The HEAD Gardener

Welcome to your space for exclusive subscribers-only events.

Every week, our Growing with The HEAD Gardener sessions offer a supportive space, with input, challenges and insights, to help you grow as a leader and cultivate leadership success!

ARRIVING 10th September 2026

We're thrilled to announce the launch of our very own online Community!!

After months of exploring a plethora of options for where and how we could deliver our vision for our new community, we settled on Circle.so.

With this exciting platform, we've built an all-in-one space to connect with you and grow our community, through exclusive content, our courses, online events, podcasts, tools, resources and more!

Plus, it offers an all-important place where you can connect back with us, and with each other, through social interaction.

What will you get with your subscription?

Our subscription plans will grant you exclusive access to:

✅ **Monthly themes** - start each month with a new theme, designed to keep you focused on your professional and leadership development

✅ **Weekly, live sessions** - exploring the monthly theme through exclusive,

evidence-based input and group coaching sessions; helping you to solve real leadership challenges, in real time!

 **24/7 access** - to The HEAD Gardener Community, including our exclusive sessions, past recordings, tools, resources, and connection with fellow leaders committed to cultivating success!

How to get involved:

Keep your eyes on your inbox on Thursday, 10th September for your exclusive, newsletter-subscriber launch offer!!

How pruning helps

In the garden:

In the garden, pruning isn't punishment, it's direction.

When you take out a crossing branch or a dead flower head, you're not damaging the plant. You're telling it where to put its energy next.

Remove the right growth and the plant redirects everything - light, water, nutrients - into the parts that matter: new shoots, stronger stems, better flowers next year.

In the workplace:

In the workplace, the same principle applies to your time, your team, and your own habits.



Every commitment, meeting, project, or "yes" you're carrying is a branch.

Some of them are exactly where the energy should go.

Others are quietly pulling resource away from the growth you actually want to see
- in yourself, in your people, in the business.

Pruning at work means:

Redirecting energy

Not just removing things. Every "no" or "not now" frees up capacity for something else.

Letting light reach what's underneath

Sometimes the good ideas, the quieter voices in your team, or your own best thinking are being shaded out by things that have simply grown too big, too fast.

Encouraging the right shape

Not just cutting for the sake of it. Good pruning has intention behind it - you're shaping toward a purpose, not just tidying.

A well-pruned plant isn't smaller for the sake of it. It's *more itself*. The same is true of a well-pruned week, team, or role.

How to choose what to let go of

The rule of the 3-D's:

Every good gardener works from the same simple rule when deciding what to cut:

Dead - Diseased - Damaged

...plus anything crossing or rubbing against healthy growth.

Here's how that translates into your working life:

In the garden

Dead

No longer growing, taking up space

Diseased

Actively draining the plant's energy

Damaged

Not going to recover well

Crossing/rubbing

Two things competing for the same space

In the workplace

Dead

Tasks, habits or meetings that have outlived their purpose but nobody's stopped them

Diseased

Situations, conversations or relationships that leave you (or others) depleted rather than energised

Damaged

Projects or approaches that are past the point of fixing, however much effort's gone in already

Crossing/rubbing

Priorities that are quietly working against each other, or people stepping on each other's roles

A few honest questions to ask yourself this month:

- What have I kept doing simply because I've always done it?

- What's costing me more energy than it's giving back?
- Where am I hanging onto something because of what I've already invested, rather than what it's actually producing now?
- If I looked at my week as a hedge, what's the shape underneath that I can't quite see yet?

You don't need to answer all of these today. Pick one that is a 'September-sized' cut.

The science of why letting go is hard

Here's why letting go is so much harder than it sounds – and why doing it in small amounts, regularly, works so well.



Your brain resists loss more than it enjoys gain.

This is *loss aversion*, one of the best-established findings in behavioural psychology: we feel the pain of giving something up roughly twice as strongly as we feel the pleasure of an equivalent gain. That's true whether you're letting go of a task, a habit, or an old way of doing your job – even when you know, rationally, it's holding you back.



The sunk cost effect keeps you watering dead branches.

The more time or effort you've already put into something, the harder it is to walk away – even once it's clearly not paying off. Your brain treats the *investment* as a reason to continue, rather than judging the thing on its current merits. Recognising this pattern is often enough to loosen its grip.



Every decision you don't have to make again is energy back in the bank.

Willpower and clear decision-making both draw on limited cognitive resources across the day - a phenomenon researchers call 'decision fatigue'. When you prune away a recurring low-value task or habit, you're not just saving the time it took. You're saving all the small decisions *about* it, every single day.



Small cuts build momentum.

Research on workplace motivation (notably the Amabile / Kramer "progress principle") shows that small, visible wins are one of the strongest drivers of sustained motivation - often more powerful than big, occasional breakthroughs. One light September trim, done and seen, tends to make the next one easier.

The takeaway:

You're not fighting a lack of discipline when letting go feels hard. You're working against well-documented wiring. Naming that makes it easier to act anyway.

Quiz: Your September Shaping Check



Answer honestly — this isn't a test, it's a torch to shine on the hedge.

Score 1 point for every "yes."

1. Is there a task on my regular to-do list I couldn't explain the purpose of, if someone asked?
2. Have I said yes to something recently mostly to avoid an awkward conversation?
3. Is there a meeting in my calendar that hasn't changed anything in months?
4. Am I still doing something a certain way "because that's how we've always done it"?
5. Is there a relationship or dynamic at work that leaves me smaller rather than bigger after every interaction?
6. Have I kept a project going mainly because of what's already been put into it?

Your results:

0–1: Nicely shaped

Your hedge is neat. Use September to look further out – is there anything just starting to grow that needs a light touch before it gets away from you?

2–4: Ready for a trim

You've got a genuine candidate for pruning. Pick just *one* from your yes answers and take the first small cut this week.

5–6: Time to get the shears out

There's real overgrowth here. Don't try to tackle it all in September - that's late-winter work. But choose the single most draining item and start there. Everything else can wait its turn.

Whatever your score, remember:

This is light shaping, not the hard structural cut. That comes later, when you're ready for it — and when you've done the groundwork to know exactly what needs to go.

September announcements

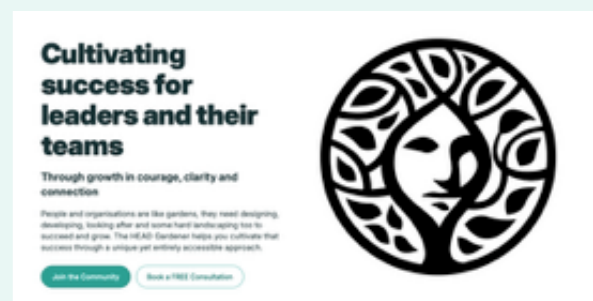
COMING LATER THIS MONTH!!

1. The HEAD Gardener's NEW LOOK website

Alongside the exciting launch of The HEAD Gardener Community, keep an eye out for our exciting website update!

What does this mean for you?

You'll still find us at the exact same place, but we'll have a new layout, fresh design and more ways for you to connect and learn about what we do!



2. The HEAD Gardener's second online learning course: *Thriving Through Transitions*



Thriving Through Transitions

continues with the analogy of the garden, and introduces a new HEAD Gardener framework, designed to guide and support leaders managing change for themselves and their teams.

Watch your inbox!

...for your 30% off offer, if you buy your course in the first week it launches!

the-head-gardener-community.circle.so

Windyridge Rock Road, Storrington, Pulborough RH20 3AH, United Kingdom

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