A shirtless man with dark hair and a friendly smile is the central figure. He is holding a pair of large, red-handled scissors. The background is a bathroom with grey tiled walls and a white shelf holding folded towels. The lighting is bright and even, highlighting the man's physique.

The New Male Grooming Obsession

(They call it "Back, sack, and crack.")

He's not the
only guy doing
some pruning
these days....

According to a survey, 95 percent of young guys now manscape—as in trim, shave, or wax their back, crotch, and butt hair. We investigate the primping trend.

BY ROBIN HILMANTEL

Seven years ago, guys would have teased the hell out of any dude who manicured his body hair. Now? Even your average Joe likes to trim the hedges on a regular basis. In fact, when we teamed up with askmen.com to poll more than 1,000 dudes about their guy-grooming habits, a whopping 95 percent admitted to manscaping. And they're not just doing minimal maintenance here. "Men who have a hairy back or chest definitely want to tame it with clippers or totally wax it off," says Jane Pham, owner of Ted D. Bare Salon, in San Jose, California. "But what I've really seen exploding recently is below-the-belt cleanup."

Men go as far as to say it's weird when they find out one of their buddies *doesn't* prune his pubic hair. "On a spring-break trip with my boys, I noticed that one guy in our group had what looked like a bush that was trying to escape from his swim trunks," says Tunde, 27. "I told him to look around at the rest of us—no one else had anything like that going on. By the next day, he had shaved."

So What Got Guys Grooming?

As it became okay for men to wear things like designer jeans and use high-end lotions and gels, they started to tend more to their body hair. Women noticed and liked it—which set fire to the trend and sent the clippers heading south. "I ask every guy at my salon why he came in," Pham says. "If he's straight, it's always, *always* to make his pubic area more... *appetizing*... to his girlfriend or women in general."

Doing It in the Privacy of a Locked Bathroom

According to our poll, most dudes take a DIY approach to hair removal. Witness Ryan, 31: Once a week, he lathers up with women's shaving cream. "I figure lots of women are using it to shave their pubic hair, so it's probably the best thing for that," he explains. He starts with his groin area and works up to his chest and back. "It's no hair left behind," he says. The entire process takes 10 to 15 minutes.

Not every guy goes totally bare. Many say they like to do some cleanup by trimming the hair down there (so it's less bushy) and shaving the outer edges, leaving a manicured patch over their pubic region.

Going Pro

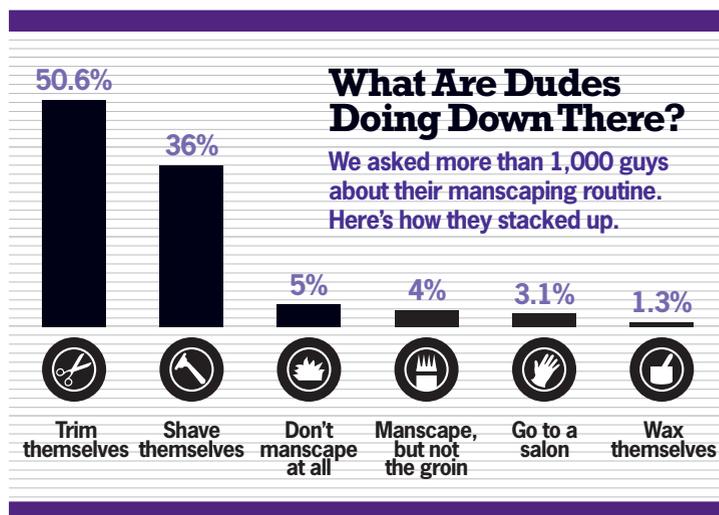
While they're still in the minority, more men *are* putting themselves in the hands of a professional these days, say salon owners. Martha Frankel, author of *Brazilian Sexy*, interviewed several manscapers across the country while writing her book. "The most common procedure, the pros told me, is to get the balls and the hair between there and the back door waxed off—in addition to their chests and backs," she says. It's known in the biz as *back, sack, and crack*.



Dudes' new chest-hair icon

Of course, style tastes vary, and some dudes like it more subtle. Says Pham, whose male clientele has jumped from 5 percent of business to 60 percent in the past few years: "Lately, a bunch have brought in photos of Bradley Cooper, wanting his chest-hair look—not totally stripped of hair but cleaned up." Sammy Orlando, a New York City waxer, gets similar requests. "Guys come to me and say, 'I want you to trim or clip my chest and pubic hair to make things neat but don't want it to be super obvious that I manscape,'" he says. "I call it the faux-natural look."

And then there are the creative thinkers. "I had one client who wanted his favorite football team's logo waxed into his crotch," Pham says. A few of the guys we talked to have gotten a down-pointing arrow, a unicorn, and—our personal favorite—a second penis.



CHRIS CLINTON: Stylist: Violet Gaynor. Hair: Anja Grassegger for Tresemme at Factory Downtown. Makeup: Jordy Poon for La Prairie. Manicure: Kim Chiu for Mark Edward Inc. Prop stylist: Robert Sumrell at Walter Schupfer Management. Bowers: Gap. (Cooper) Doug Curran/© 2009 20th Century Fox.