The Double Reed

A double reed can be tuned in three different ways:
1. The opening of the reed can be adjusted = opened or closed

2. The end of the reed can be trimmed = a shortening of the length that vibrates.

3. The thickness of the reed can be trimmed ex. by shaving or sanding. Really the only adjustment the player needs to make presuming that the instrument builder has tuned the instrument is to adjust the reed by pressing on the brass bridle damp that holds the reed in shape.

1. Opening: the reed gives a stronger, harder and lower tone. The pipes are harder to blow, more difficult to attain the higher tones but are more reliable on the lower notes. The pipes are generally less sensitive.

2. Closing: the reed has the opposite effect. The tone becomes milder, lighter and higher. It is easier to reach the higher tones but the lower tones are more sensitive (involuntary overtones).

Care should be taken when trimming the length of the reed (what is gone is gone).
One trims the reed when the tone is too low and one can not press it together further.
With pipes that can be overblown one can trim the reed even when the highest tone (or the highest tones) are not stabile and want to “fall down” into the first octave.
Trimming should be carried out in small stages. Straight pruning shears are the ideal tool.

3. Sharing the thickness of the reed can be carried out in several ways. Generally making the reed thinner makes it softer, thereby easier to play although more unstable.
Sharing the top of the reed gives a higher tone and easier response.
Sharing the root of the reed gives a lower tone and usually easier access to the first overtone.
The sharing demands experience and sensitivity. Always trim equally on the both sides of the reed. Check thickness by holding the reed against a light.

Lastly I would like to point out that tuning pipes can also be achieved by slightly pushing in or pulling out the reed.

Out= lower tone
In= higher tone

But the reed should not be moved to much (2-3mm), otherwise a mensur- intonationproblem results.

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