

Pruning Basics!

The average lifespan of a shrub installation is approximately 10 years but with regular pruning and a little care you can extend the lifespan of your flowerbeds up to another 10 years. Some shrubs may require little or no pruning other than removing dead, damaged or diseased wood. Others may require more to keep the plant healthy and aesthetically pleasing. Once you have all the dead, damaged or diseased wood out, prune out weak stems and crossing or congested growth. Also remove any awkward stems that spoil the shape.

Pruning Tools: *Make sure you use sharp clean tools to prevent disease.*

- * **Shears** will give you a more formal appearance allowing more shapes such as spheres, cones or cubes. Using shears thickens the outer surface creating a solid look. Shears are used most often on evergreens.
- * **Pruners, saws and loppers** remove specific branches leaving more natural open airy look. These tools are used most often on flowering shrubs and trees.

Evergreen and Broadleaf Evergreen Shrubs

The best time to prune evergreens is late May and a second trimming in late August. This includes cedars, yews, junipers, boxwood, euonymus and holly. Never cut into the 'dead' centre of an evergreen. The shrub will likely not recover and will always have a hole.

Summer Flowering Shrubs

Summer flowering shrubs are best pruned in the spring. This includes smoke bush, rose-of-sharon, woody hydrangeas, St. John's wort, potentilla, and weigela.

Mop head hydrangeas (macrophylla) flowers on previous years growth so only prune back dead and weak shoots.

Annabelle Hydrangeas, Butterfly bushes and caryopteris can be pruned back to 2 buds from the base once the new growth is visible.

Spring Flowering Shrubs

These get pruned once they are finished flowering. This includes serviceberries, barberries, redbuds, forsythia, beauty bush, golden chain tree, magnolia, crabapple, mock orange, sandcherry, rhodo, roses, certain spireas, lilacs, and viburnums.

Trees

Trees do not need pruned very often and are pruned to have a good structure or frame. It is recommended to consult or hire an arborist to trim large trees especially if they are near any power lines.

Bleeders Maples (including Japanese maples), birch, honey locust, magnolias, tulip trees and linden trees all bleed if pruned in the spring when sap is flowing. Instead prune these in mid to late summer.

Hard Pruning – This involves pruning a substantial amount of branches to get a desired size or shape. It stimulates vigorous growth which will help shape the plant.

Spireas, ninebarks, lilacs and dogwoods can handle a hard pruning every 3-5 years to maintain a smaller sized shrub and rejuvenate it.

Dappled willows need a hard pruning to retain the dappled foliage which only comes on new wood. This can be done more than once in a season.

You have to be really carefully when pruning old shrubs that have never been pruned before. Woody stocks may not recover as easily from a heavy pruning. Use the 1/3 at a time rule and gradually bring the size down over a period of a few years.

If you only remember one thing: Prune it after it flowers!

General Guide Line: do not remove more than 1/3 of a plant at a time.

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