

Pruning Ornamental Shrubs & Trees

Timing of pruning is based on the flowering, fruiting, or growth habits of a plant, its tendency to “bleed” and the fact that pruning usually stimulates a flush of regrowth. Most plants can be pruned at almost any time of year without jeopardizing basic survival. However, it is preferable to prune specific plants at specific points in the year.

In any of the foregoing cases, the timing of pruning is based on common sense to maximize flowering of a plant which was planted for its flowers. If your pruning is timed such that flowering is sacrificed, it will not be detrimental to the plant’s survival. It will simply mean a loss of one season’s floral display. In general, pruning of older stems will stimulate new growth and increase blooming. Older stems, generally, produce fewer flowers each year

Spring – flowering trees & shrubs which should be pruned after flowering

Scientific Name	Common Name	Scientific Name	Common Name
Amelanchier	Serviceberry	Ligustrum	Privet
Berberis	Barberry	Lonicera	Honeysuckle
Calycanthus	Carolina Allspice	Magnolia	Magnolia
Caragana	Peashrub	Malus	Crabapple
Celastrus	Bittersweet	Philedelphus	Mock Orange
Cercis	Redbud	Pieris	Andromeda
Chanomeles	Flowering Quince	Prunus	Flowering Cherry & Plum
Chionanthus	Fringetree	Pyracantha	Yukon Bell
Kousa	Kousa Dogwood	Rhododendron	Rhododendron Azalea
Cornus Mas	Cornelian Cherry	Rhodotypos Scandens	Black Jetbead
Cotinus Coggygria	Smoketree	Ribes	Currant
Cotoneaster	Cottoneaster	Sorbus	Mountain Ash
Crataegus	Hawthorn	Spiraea Thunbergii	Thunberg Spirea
Deutzia	Deutzia	Spiraea Vanhouttei	Vanhoutte Spirea
Euonymus	Winged Spindletree	Syringa	Lilac
Forsythia	Forsythia	Viburnum	Viburnum
Kalmia Latifolia	Mountain Laurel	Weigela	Weigela
Kolkwitzia Amabilis	Beauty Bush	Wisteria	Wisteria
Laburnum	Goldenrain Tree		

Pruning to Maximize Fruit Display – Shrubs or trees that are prized for their fruit should be pruned after the fruit drops or is eaten by wildlife. Although they may flower early in the season, the fruit should be allowed to develop. After the fruit has lost its appeal, then prune. Examples of plants in this group are certain Viburnums and Hawthorns.

Pruning Needle (Coniferous) Evergreens – To promote a compact plant, coniferous evergreens can be pruned in late spring as the new branches elongate, but before they become stiff. Otherwise, they, like broadleaved evergreens, can be pruned whenever the wood is not frozen. However, coniferous types will generally not develop new shoots on older wood, so it isn’t advisable to cut back beyond the living foliage portion of the branches.

Pruning in Anticipation of Growth Stimulation – In general, except for the cases already cited, the best time to prune is when the plant will recover the fastest. Severe pruning should be done just before regrowth starts in the spring so bare stubs will be hidden quickly. Pruning in late summer should be avoided since it stimulates succulent growth which may not harden sufficiently to avoid winter dieback. Storm damaged plants should be pruned as soon after the damage occurs as possible.



Summer flowering trees and shrubs – prune before spring growth begins.

Scientific Name	Common Name
Buddleia	Butterfly Bush
Callicarpa	Beautyberry
Hibiscus Syriacus	Shrub- Althea
Hydrangea Arborescens	Smooth Hydrangea
Hydrangea Paniculata ‘ Grandiflora’	P. G. Hydrangea
Hypericum	St. John’s Wort
Koelreuteria Paniculata	Goldenrain Tree
Potentilla	Potentilla
Rhus	Sumac
Rosa Cvs.	Hybrid Tea Roses, Shrub Roses
Sorbaria	False Spirea
Symphoricarpos	Snowberry, Coralberry

Pruning Trees Known as Bleeders – Some deciduous trees have an exceptionally heavy sap flow in the early spring. If cuts are made then, the trees will “bleed”. While this sap loss does not injure the tree, it can be objectionable aesthetically and cause problems for pedestrians, automobiles, etc., passing underneath. “Bleeding” can be avoided by pruning in mid-summer or late fall. Maple, Birch, Dogwood, Elm, Walnut, and Yellowwood are examples of trees best treated this way. Oak trees should not be pruned between April 15th and October 15th.

Trees and shrubs which may be pruned both before and after bloom.

Scientific Name	Common Name
Cornus Sericea	Red-osier Dogwood
Cotoneaster Apiculatus	Cranberry Cotoneaster
Cotoneaster Divaricatus	Spreading Cotoneaster
Cotoneaster multiflorus	Many Flowered Cotoneaster
Mahonia Aquifolium	Oregon Hollygrape
Spiraea x Bumalda	Anthony Waterer & Froebel Spirea
Symphoricarpos Albus	Snowberry
Symphoricarpos Chenaultii	Chenault Coralberry
Weigela	Weigela

Landscape plants which may be rejuvenated pruned (completely cut back to the ground).

Scientific Name	Common Name
Buddleia	Butterfly Bush
Forsythia	Forsythia
Hibiscus Syriacus	Shrub – Althea
Hydreangea Arborescens “Grandiflora”	Hills of Snow
Hydrangea Quercifolia	Oakleaf Hydrangea
Ligustrum Vulgare	Privet
Lonicera	Honeysuckle
Spiraea	Spirea
Syringa	Lilac