

Ornamental Shrubs

Most deciduous flowering shrubs require little more than regular maintenance pruning: removal of dead, diseased, or damaged branches whenever you notice them. Remember, a plant should not be pruned unless there is a good reason for doing so. Some shrubs may need to be cut back to keep them from getting too tall or too broad. Because they renew themselves by growing new stems from the roots or from the base, they do not require pruning to encourage a balanced, open structure of large branches as do trees.

___Some shrubs, like hydrangea, lilac, and honeysuckle, benefit from occasional drastic pruning. Cut back almost to the ground, these plants will virtually replace themselves with new growth. Others, however, are better served by less drastic renovation pruning spread over two or three seasons.

___Before pruning a flowering shrub, check to see whether it flowers on wood produced the same year or on year-old wood that grew during the previous season. While there is no foolproof way to tell if plants bloom on old or new wood, most plants that bloom before the first of June do so on old wood, and those that flower later, bloom on new wood.

___**If flowers form on old wood**, the shrub should be pruned immediately after the flowers fade. If you prune these plants in winter or spring, you'll cut away flower buds. If you don't prune them immediately after they flower, they won't have enough time to develop a new set of buds to flower the following spring. Examples are beautybush, *Buddleia*, *Alternifolia*, *Deutzia*, *Cotinus*, forsythia, honeysuckle, *Kerria*, lilac, and some spireas and viburnums.

___**If flowers are produced on new wood**, the shrub may be pruned in late winter or early spring before the buds become green. Some examples are *Buddleias* other than *alternifolia*, broom, crape myrtle, spreading euonymus, *Hibiscus syriacus*, *Hydrangea paniculata*, *Potentilla* witch hazel, and some spireas like *S. japonica*.

___Shrubs that flowers on old wood (some examples are jasmine, forsythia, mock orange, lilac and *Pyracantha*) should be pruned in the following manner. To remove dead, diseased, or damaged wood, follow these steps:

___Cut back shoots that have borne flowers, leaving vigorous young shoots lower down on

___Remove any puny or overly vigorous shoots and suckers that spoil the shape of the plant.

___On shrubs three or more years old, begin to remove some of the oldest shoots at the base as close to the ground as possible, to simulate the growth of new shoots. Remove one out of every three to five older shoots depending on the size of the shrub.

___Shrubs that flowers on new wood should be allowed to form a strong framework of branches in their first several years. In the first year, tip back shoots to the first strong bud or pair of buds. Remove puny, overly vigorous shoots.

___In the second year and there after prune back new shoots to within one or two buds of last year's growth. In the fourth or fifth year begin to remove older branches at the base.

Renovation

___When restoring old shrubs, follow these guidelines, remembering to prune according to the plant's natural form.

___Remove dead, damaged, diseased, weak or badly placed stems. If a shrub has become too large, cut several of the oldest stems to the ground and cut the remaining ones to just below the height you want for the shrub. Within a year or two the branches will grow back and hide the pruning wounds. In future, prune annually to maintain desired height and breadth.

___If a low-growing shrub has become too dense, prune half the stems to the ground the first year. Prune the remaining half the second year. If the shrub is very vigorous, cut all the stems to the ground the first year.

___If a shrub's growth has become thin and floppy, cut back all the leggy stems by half and remove some of the oldest stems to the ground.

___If the shrub has become too twiggy, with many small branches at the ends of the branches, prune the oldest branches to the ground and cut off the outer twiggy growth.

___In all of the above instances a healthy and reasonably vigorous plant will come back with lush growth and fill out within three years.

the main stems.

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