

## When to Prune

The best time to prune depends on many variables. In deciding when to prune you must consider: the condition of the plant, the length of its growing season, when it blooms, and whether its flower buds form on new growth or only on older wood.

— **Late winter** - This is the best time to prune many plants, including fruit trees, certain roses, broad-leafed evergreens, vines, and some flowering plants. What is late winter in your area? It is when the days have begun to lengthen and warm noticeably. In many regions late winter means mid-February, in others mid-March. Much later than that is usually too late; plants are no longer dormant.

— Drastic pruning of a neglected plant in late winter can cause overly vigorous growth of leaves and wood at the expense of flowers and fruit. Either postpone such pruning until spring or spread it out over several seasons.

— **Spring** - Remove any wood damaged by winter wind, ice, or snow. Remember, prune back to a healthy bud or limb. Repair damage from animals.

— **Early summer** - Time to shear evergreens and hedges. This is when they are putting on their greatest growth. This is also the time to prune all early-blooming shrubs after the last flowers fade.

— **Late summer** - This is a good time to prune certain shade trees, such as maples and birches, that lose too much sap if pruned in spring.

— Some orchardists prefer to prune fruit trees now, since summer pruning encourages trees to set more flower and fruit buds and fewer leaf and branch buds. In the Deep South, however, late-summer pruning of fruit trees is unacceptable since it encourages a spurt of growth late in the season that would be at risk of cold injury.

— **Autumn** - In all but the most northern regions this is a good time to prune roses, clematis, hydrangea, buddleia, crape myrtle, potentilla, hibiscus, grape vines, and the small-berry fruits. However, in Florida and other Sunbelt regions, the best pruning times for these ornamental shrubs vary. Consult local authorities.

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