

'The Art of Pruning'
Presented by Master Gardener Pam Bohlander
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Three parts of good pruning

Tools

Timing

Technique

Pruning Tools

Always use bypass pruners to make clean cut. Use clean, sharp tools. Gas & electric shears are not pruning tools.

Timing

Prune in late winter when dormant for shape and form

Rejuvenate shrubs March or early April before flush of spring growth.

Prune winter flowering shrubs after they bloom. Examples:

Camellia sasanqua

Flowering Quince

Camellia japonica

Witch Hazel

Prune spring flowering trees and shrubs immediately AFTER they bloom.

Azalea

Japanese Pieris

Beautybush

Pyracanthus

Big Leaf hydrangea

Quince

Crabapple

Redbud

Deutzia

Saucer and star magnolia

Dogwood

Spirea

Viburnum

Weigelia

Flowering almond,
cherry, quince

Winter Daphne

Forsythia

Witchhazel

Gardenia

Prune summer flowering shrubs in the spring before growth begins.

Barberry

Nandina

Beautyberry

Rose of Sharon

Butterfly bush

Sourwood

Chaste tree

Sweetshrub

Crape myrtle

Tea Olive

Golden Rain Tree

Other shrubs and evergreens with flowers that are not noteworthy

Loropetalum and Indian Hawthorne

Prune in early spring if the flowering is not important

Prune immediately after flowering if flowering is important but complete by early summer

Pruning young or newly established trees

Remove suckers

Remove low growing branches

Remove upright shoots

Remove inward growing branches

Remove branches that compete with the central leader

Do not remove more than 30% of the live crown in any one year

Making the cut

Direct growth by cutting above a bud

Look where the bud is pointing to direct growth. Select an outward growing bud

Large limbs – use the three step method

Leave the branch collar intact

Never use sealer to cover the cut

Prune out any dead wood from previous pruning

Never top a tree or shrub or shear into a lollipop shape

Shearing

vs

Thinning

Dense growth near outer portion

Little light to reach the interior portion
of the shrub

Interior portion becomes sparse

Shrub more prone to disease

Shortens life span of the shrub

Thinning by hand pruning select branches
back to a lateral bud

Encourages new growth in the interior
of the shrub

Reduces size

Fuller, more attractive

Healthier plant

Removes inward growing and crossing
branches

Crape Myrtles

Never commit 'crape murder'

Remove inward growing and crossing branches.

Selectively prune branches rubbing together

Remove dead and diseased wood from previous pruning.

Clean up branches to promote upward growth

Hydrangeas

Hydrangea macrophylla (mophead and lace cap)

Blooms on old wood, prune immediately after flowering EXCEPT for Endless Summer varieties
that bloom on old and new wood

Hydrangea paniculata (Tardiva, Pinky Winky)

Blooms on new wood. Prune in the spring

Hydrangea quercifolia (Oakleaf)

Prune after flowering – very gently

Roses

Need very specialized pruning. Open up like a baseball glove.

Prune last week of February / first week of March when buds begin to swell.

Knockout roses are self cleaning but do benefit from deadheading

Fertilize after Pruning

To promote growth

Healthy plants resist disease and pests

Resources:

Basic Principles of Pruning Woody Plants, University of Georgia Extension, Bulletin 949
pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/B949/B949.html

Pruning Shade Trees, University of Georgia Extension, Circular 628
pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/C628-w.html

The American Horticultural Society Pruning and Training, Christopher Brickell & David Joyce, 2011, DK Publishing Inc.