

Your Handy Shrub-Pruning Guide

BY: GARDEN GATE STAFF

Do you know which of your shrubs could benefit from pruning? We do! Our guide will help you know how to prune and when to prune 35+ different shrubs.

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Find out the best time to prune different shrubs

Get your [pruners](#) ready! Here's a list of over 30 common shrubs that respond well to maintenance pruning. And if you do it on a regular basis – once a year on most shrubs – it's an easy task. Since there are no drastic cuts, the shrubs fill in again in just a few weeks, too. So think about which of these shrubs you have in your garden – you may have at least one that could be improved by a bit of pruning right now!

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How to prune 37 common shrubs

Plant Name	Best time to prune	Hardiness Zones	Pruning Tips
Abelia, glossy <i>Abelia x grandiflora</i>	Winter	6-9	If needed, thin out the oldest stems to the ground each winter to keep this shrub in shape

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Azalea <i>Rhododendron</i> hybrid	Late spring to early summer	4-9	Slow to recover from heavy pruning; taking off too much may retard blooming for a year or two
Barberry <i>Berberis</i> spp.	Late spring to early summer	4-8	Pruning is the same for both deciduous and evergreen types; thorny, so always wear gloves
Bayberry, northern <i>Myrica pensylvanica</i>	Early summer	3-7	Maintain natural, informal shape and size with light pruning; rarely needs rejuvenation
Burning bush <i>Euonymus alatus</i>	Anytime	4-9	Prune before new growth for a more casual look or after new growth for a tighter, more formal appearance
Camellia, Japanese <i>Camellia japonica</i>	Late spring	6-8	Slow to recover from heavy pruning so try to keep it in shape with more frequent light trimmings
Carolina allspice/sweetshrub <i>Calycanthus floridus</i>	Spring or late summer	4-9	Lightly prune to maintain form
Chastetree <i>Vitex agnus-castus</i>	Late winter	6-9	Shrubs can be pruned quite severely; prune tree-form specimens only lightly
Cotoneaster <i>Cotoneaster</i> spp.	Winter	4-9	Prone to fire blight so prune below infected areas; sterilize shears between cuts with bleach solution
Deutzia <i>Deutzia</i> spp.	Early summer	5-8	Blooms better with annual pruning
Dogwood, red twig <i>Cornus alba</i>	Winter or early spring	2-8	Hard pruning in early spring produces the most colorful stems for winter interest

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Firethorn <i>Pyracantha coccinea</i>	Summer	5-9	Thorny, so wear gloves; sterilize shears between cuts to prevent spreading fire blight
Forsythia <i>Forsythia</i> hybrid	Spring	4-8	Prune every year after blooming to keep this fast-growing shrub under control
Fothergilla, dwarf <i>Fothergilla gardenii</i>	Early summer	5-8	Open habit and small size; rarely needs much pruning
Heavenly bamboo <i>Nandina domestica</i>	Spring	6-9	Prune tips to maintain size; thin out four or five of the oldest stems each year to keep this shrub tidy
Honeysuckle <i>Lonicera</i> spp.	Summer	3-10	Tolerant of almost any type of pruning; quick to recover and fill in again
Hydrangea, bigleaf <i>Hydrangea macrophylla</i>	Spring	4-9	Prune out dead branches in spring just as leaves are unfurling.
Hydrangea, panicle <i>Hydrangea paniculata</i>	Spring	3-9	Except for cutting out dead branches, pruning is not necessary, but to keep a compact shape, cut branch tips back by one-third in spring as buds are turning green.
<u>Hydrangea, smooth</u> <i>Hydrangea arborescens</i>	Late winter	3-9	Prune lightly to allow this plant to grow tallest; cutting back severely will give you fewer, but larger, flowers
Kerria <i>Kerria japonica</i>	Early summer	4-9	Take out some of the oldest stems to produce more flowers and bright green stems for winter interest

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Lilac, common <i>Syringa vulgaris</i>	Late spring	3-8	Prune lightly to control size; cut back severely when overgrown – takes several years to bloom again
Lilac, dwarf Korean <i>Syringa meyeri</i> 'Palibin'	Early summer	3-8/8-1	Rarely needs much pruning to stay dense and compact
Maple, Amur <i>Acer tataricum ginnala</i>	Midsummer	2-8	Wounds bleed sap if cut in winter or early spring
Mockorange <i>Philadelphus</i> hybrid	Late spring	4-8	Remove oldest stems from the center to keep this shrub blooming its best
Mountain-laurel <i>Kalmia latifolia</i>	Early summer	4-9	Performs well with minimal pruning; deadhead spent flowers to stimulate more side branches
Privet <i>Ligustrum</i> spp.	Early spring	3-10	Do heavy pruning in early spring, but can be lightly trimmed at any time during the year
Pussywillow <i>Salix caprea</i>	Late spring	3-8	Removing some of the oldest stems will produce long stems for cutting; quick to recover from pruning
Quince, flowering (in photo above) <i>Chaenomeles</i> spp.	Late spring to summer	5-8/8-1	Wear gloves and long sleeves, flowering spurs are similar to thorns
Rose-of-Sharon <i>Hibiscus syriacus</i>	Early spring	5-8	Prune lightly to maintain a large size shrub or keep it small with regular heavy pruning
Siberian peashrub <i>Caragana arborescens</i>	Late spring	2-7	Rarely needs pruning except to control size; lightly trim specimens that are trained into tree-form

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Smoke tree <i>Cotinus coggygria</i>	Winter	5-8	Prune lightly for large plants or cut to the ground each winter to maintain a small shrub
<u>Spirea, Japanese</u> <i>Spiraea japonica</i>	Late winter	3-8	Cut back severely each year for dense growth and more flowers; trim lightly after flowering for a possible rebloom
Spirea, Van Houtte <i>Spiraea x vanhouttei</i>	Late spring	3-9	Recovers quickly from hard pruning; best form and flowering in early summer with regular trimming
Viburnum, arrowwood <i>Viburnum dentatum</i>	Late spring	3-8	You'll lose the fall fruit with spring pruning, but this shrub will flower normally next spring
Virginia sweetspire <i>Itea virginica</i>	Summer	5-9	Pruning will keep this shrub from growing loose and floppy; rarely needs to be cut back severely
Weigela <i>Weigela florida</i>	Summer	4-9	Regular pruning promotes the best flowering; recovers quickly from a severe cutting back
Winterberry <i>Ilex verticillata</i>	Late winter	4-8	Regular light pruning will result in more colorful fruit along the stems; slow to recover from heavy pruning
Witchhazel <i>Hamamelis</i> spp.	Late spring to summer	4-8	Open branching habit rarely needs much pruning; prune lightly to control size
Yew <i>Taxus</i> spp.	Late winter	4-8	Late winter for heavy pruning; can easily be trimmed any time of year

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