

Pruning Deciduous Shrubs

Pruning has a major influence on a shrub's flowering habit, size, shape, and pest problems. Although the best time to prune varies, in general, if the shrub blooms before June 15, prune as soon as the bloom is finished. If the shrub blooms after June 15, prune when it is dormant or in early spring before buds start to grow. Of course, broken, diseased, or crossing branches can be removed at any time. Methods of pruning are:

Thinning: A branch is cut to a lateral side branch or at ground level. This results in a more open plant and does not stimulate excessive new growth. Considerable growth can be cut off without changing the plant's natural appearance or habit. Thin out the oldest and tallest stems first and use pruning shears, not hedge shears.



THINNING



GRADUAL RENEWAL

Heading: These cuts shorten, but do not remove entire branches or shoots. Heading cuts stimulate the buds on the remaining portion of the branch or shoot to grow. This technique is used to promote a dense, more compact growth habit. It is also used to reduce the overall size or height of a plant.

Gradual Renewal: Renewal pruning removes the oldest branches gradually from an overgrown shrub at the ground level over a three-year period. New shoots that develop can be cut back to various lengths by the thinning method to develop strong branches.



Shearing: Shearing is not pruning. This method should not be used on foundation plants, but should be restricted to formal hedges. Shearing creates a thick profusion of growth on the exterior of the plant. The center of the plant is shaded, which creates a dead zone that can't produce new shoots and foliage on the interior dies. If you do shear a hedge, make it wider at the bottom with the sides slanting so that sun can reach more of the plant.

When pruning, make your cut above a node and make it at a slight angle. The new growth will then result from the node. While pruning is done to reduce the overall size of a plant, remember that the growth of shoots near the pruning cut are invigorated.

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