

Pruning

General Recommendations

Always feel free to ask a nursery staff member if you have any questions regarding pruning of your plants. Pruning can be stressful, but the long term benefits outweigh the temporary stress. Pruning is a natural and healthy process for your plants to go through and will help you plants health and appearance in the years to come. Always be sure to use clean, sharp tools when pruning your plants to avoid any harmful transfer of chemicals, etc. "Clean" in this case meansto use bleach to disinfect your pruners.

Annuals

PINCHING. If you are starting your plants from seed or very young cuttings, pinching the plants back in early season will create more branches and more flowers. If you are pinching because the plant is taking over your container, never take more than 1/3 of the plant off, making sure toleave viable leaves so that plant can get its nutrients.

DEADHEADING. When flowers are past their prime, deadhead (cutting or pinching off the dead flowers) and take the stem or seed pod with it. Why? The plant will continue to bloom if you deadhead and cosmetically, your plant will look nicer without the wilted/dead flower heads. If you don't deadhead, depending on the plant, some varieties will continue to bloom while somevarieties will stop blooming if they go to seed (life cycle is complete). Seed development drains the plant's resources which may not allow it to flush out new growth.

Perennial Pruning (Fall & Spring)

GENERAL. There are some exceptions to cutting back plants depending on personal preferenceor winter interest. These include but are not limited to: Heucheras, Bergenia, Dianthus, Christmas Fern. A reason to not cut back these plants in the fall is that they can get injured. On Heucherasspecifically, the crown of the plant can be injured if cut too far down to the ground and it may not survive the winter.

ORNAMENTAL GRASSES. Generally, we recommend leaving grasses standing over winter. Prunethem back in spring before you see new growth emerging from the bottom to about 3-6" above the ground. If you prefer, you can cut the plant back in the winter, but will lose winter interest. If you do not cut back in the spring or forget, leave the dead growth standing as this won't hurt the plant.

HARDY HIBISCUS (NOT rose of Sharon). We recommend cutting the sticks down to approximately 6-12" in height in the fall, especially if it's a new plant. This Hibiscus is a late season emerger. Disturbing the roots will KILL the plant. If you forget to prune in the fall, it can be done in the spring.

PEONIES & IRIS. We strongly recommend cutting these down in the fall. Prune them back to about 3-6" above the ground. Remove the dead leaves and debris to prevent mildew and borer issues in the following seasons.

OTHER PERENNIALS. All other perennials should be pruned back in late fall. Cut them back to about 3" above the ground and remove all debris. If you forget to prune in late fall, it will not harm the plant. Do it instead in early spring and remove the debris to help prevent disease and insect problems.

Shrub Pruning

SPRING VS. FALL. Spring pruning is preferred for shrubs that flower in spring. These should be pruned immediately after flowering and include: Forsythia, Lilac, Spirea, Potentilla. If you are pruning more than 25% of plant, this should be done while plant is dormant and this may result in reduced blooms for one season. Fall pruning is preferred for most other shrubs. Late fall is the ideal time to prune and can be done before the leaves drop off

SHAPING. When cutting back in March, you can do a thorough shaping of shrubs at that time. When shrubs are actively growing, one stray/rogue stem can be removed and it will not hurt the plant. Some plants can tolerate pruning again when they are done blooming, such as: Spireas, Potentilla, Willows.

THINNING, RENEWAL PRUNING. Renewal pruning is done on overgrown, top heavy, woody shrubs. It consists of selectively pruning (over time, typically 3 years) some of the thicker growth down to the ground. Renewal pruning increases younger growth and bottom growth from the base of the plant. Renewal pruning may not be successful for all plants, depending on their variety, age, and growing situation. Varieties that do well with renewal pruning are Lilac, Dogwood, Forsythia (non-dwarf), and Mockorange.

DEADHEADING. Deadheading or cutback for improved flowering can be completed on some shrubs. Shrub Roses can have an individual flower pruned out from the clump of flowers, if you want to remove a brown flower ("deadheading"). Spireas can be pruned 1/3 to 1/2 off when they are done flowering.

Evergreen Pruning

SHEARING. Shearing should only be done when the plant is actively growing (typically this is early July, but depends on weather). Only certain evergreens should be sheared. A nursery staff member can tell you if your evergreens are ones that can be sheared. How far you should shear an evergreen depends on how patient you are willing to be. Extreme shearing takes time to recover and can take up to 2-3 years to recover. We recommend the maximum shearing to be 1/2 of the new growth, no more.

GENERAL. Pines and Junipers are evergreens that are hard to cut back. Once these plants are too large for a given area, it is difficult to get back to a reasonable size and may need to be replaced. To slow the growth of these evergreens, you can pinch back new candles (buds), in June or when growth begins.

Tree Pruning (Non-Structural)

SPRING VS. FALL. Anything tree with dead, broken, damaged or crossing can be pruned at any time of year, except oaks. Fruit trees prefer to be pruned in early spring or late winter before the buds swell. Oak trees should be pruned in winter only when the tree is completely dormant.

Some trees are seasonally sensitive to pruning due to the increased risk of diseases or pests when pruning at inappropriate times of the year. The open flesh wounds made at the wrong time of year can attract pests or diseases that may harm or kill the tree.