HOME GROUNDS FACT SHEET

Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Nassau County

Shrub Pruning

When looking over a shrub before pruning, there are certain definite classes of material that must be considered for removal. They are:

1. Dead or diseased wood or wood that is seriously infested with insects.
2. Weak wood that is not productive of bloom.
3. Excess suckers and shoots, whether originating from the base or on the upper part of the trunks.
4. Branches that are rubbing.

Keep in mind your purpose in pruning. Are you pruning to keep growth in scale with the surroundings, maximize flowering and/or fruiting, enhance form, etc.? Prune for a purpose, not just because the shears and saw are handy.

TIME AND FREQUENCY OF PRUNING

Prune the following shrubs during the dormant season before leaf buds break in the spring. All are summer-flowering plants that produce their blooms on growth of the same season.

- *Abelia grandiflora*
- *Acanthopanax sieboldianus* (5-leaf aralia)
- *Aesculus parviflora* (bottlebrush buckeye)
- *Amorpha* (leadplant)
- * *Buddleia* (butterfly bush), except *B. alternifolia*
- *Callicarpa* (beautyberry)
- * *Caryopteris* (blue spirea)
- *Ceanothus* (New Jersey tea or redroot)
- *Clethra* (summersweet, sweet pepperbush)
- * *Cornus* (dogwood species with brightly colored stems)
- *Diervilla* (dwarf bush-honeysuckle)
- *Hibiscus syriacus* (Rose of Sharon)
- *Hydrangea* (florists varieties)
- * *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Grandiflora' (Hills of Snow)
- * *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Grandiflora' (Pee Gee)
- *Hypericum* (St. John's-wort)
- *Indigofera* (indigo)
- *Lagerstroemia indica* (crepe myrtle)
- *Lavender*

- *Lespedeza* (bush clover)
- *Ligustrum* (privet)
- * *Perovskia* (Russian sage)
- *Potentilla* (cinquefoil)
- *Rhus* (sumac)
- *Rosa* (hybrid tea)
- * *Sorbaria* (false spirea)
- *Spiraea bumalda* 'Anthony Waterer'
- *Spiraea billardii*
- * *Symphoricarpus* (snowberry)
- * *Tamarix*
- * *Vitex* (chaste tree)

Cut almost to the soil, especially sorts which freeze severely.

* Generally requires annual maintenance pruning in February or March. May also be cut back severely, if necessary, at that time.
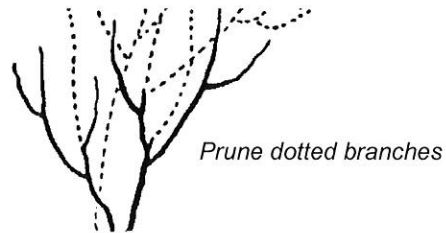
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These spring-flowering shrubs should be selectively *maintenance* pruned in late winter/early spring before foliage appears or immediately after flowering. Thin old, unproductive canes/branches every 1 to 2 years by cutting out at ground level. Head back out-of-scale upper and outward-spreading branches to a lateral. If pruning early in the season, be aware that some flowering will be sacrificed, but branch structure and habit will be more obvious with the plant void of foliage. By following this more frequent schedule of maintenance pruning, plants will remain in scale and rarely require major rejuvination.

➢ *Deutzia*
➢ *Exochorda* (pearlbush)
➢ *Forsythia* (shrub types)
➢ *Jasminum nudiflorum* (winter jasmine)
➢ *Kerria japonica* (Japanese kerria)
➢ *Kolkwitzia amabilis* (beautybush)
➢ *Physocarpus opulifolius* (ninebark)
➢ *Philadelphus* (mock orange)
➢ *Pyracantha coccinea*
➢ *Stephanandra incisa* (cutleaf stephanandra)
➢ *Spiraea arguta* (garland spirea)
➢ *Spiraea prunifolia* (bridal wreath)

➢ *Spiraea thunbergii* (thunberg spirea)
➢ *Spiraea* x *vanhouttei* (Vanhoutte spirea)
➢ *Weigela florida* (old fashioned weigela)

Prune dotted branches

The following shrubs seldom need pruning; only periodic corrective thinning or removal of out-of-scale branches.

➢ *Acanthopanax* (five leaf aralia)
➢ *Aesculus parviflora* (bottlebrush buckeye)
➢ *Amelanchier* (shadbush)
➢ *Aronia* (Juneberry)
➢ *Barberis* (barberry) deciduous types
➢ *Chaenomeles* (flowering quince)
➢ *Clethra* (summersweet)
➢ *Cornus mas* (Cornelian cherry)
➢ *Cornus racemosa* (gray dogwood)
➢ *Corylus* (hazelnut)
➢ *Cotoneaster*
➢ *Cystisus* (broom)
➢ *Daphne*
➢ *Diervilla* (dwarf bush honeysuckle)
➢ *Elaeagnus* (autumn olive)
➢ *Euonymus alatus*
➢ *Forsythia suspensa*

➢ *Hamamelis* (witch hazel)
➢ *Hypericum*
➢ *Ilex* (holly, deciduous types)
➢ *Ligustrum* (privet)
➢ *Lindera benzoine* (spicebush)
➢ *Lonicera* (honeysuckle)
➢ *Magnolia*
➢ *Myrica* (bayberry)
➢ *Photinia*
➢ *Potentilla fruticosa* (cinquefoil)
➢ *Rhododendron* (deciduous types of azaleas)
➢ *Rhus* (sumac)
➢ *Ribes* (alpine currant)
➢ *Robinia hispida* (rose acacia)
➢ *Rosa* (rose) species
➢ *Viburnum*

Flowers should be removed immediately after bloom, especially if fuller plants are desired.

➢ *Rhododendron* sp. (if desired include azalea)
➢ *Kalmia latifolia* (mountain laurel)
➢ *Syringia vulgaris* (common lilac)

Pinch off growing tips and remove flowers as soon as faded.