

Pruning Shrubs & Hedges

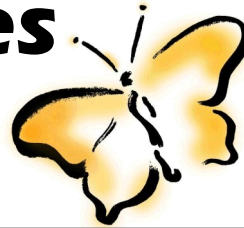
Campbell's

CULTIVATING IDEAS

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The first thing to know before pruning a flowering shrub is whether it blooms in the spring or in the summer. Spring blooming shrubs, such as Forsythia, Lilac, Quince, etc. bloom on the previous season's wood. Buds are formed in June or July, but they remain dormant until early spring. These shrubs can be pruned while they are blooming, or a week or two after flowers drop. Don't prune in autumn or you will cut off the wood and buds forming for next spring's flowering. New growth that develops during the summer can be controlled by pinching. If you wish, you can cut branches as soon as the flower buds begin to swell in spring and put them in water indoors to force early blooms.

Summer and fall blooming shrubs bloom on the current season's wood. Prune these shrubs in early spring, after frost is no longer likely and before plant growth begins. Prune for shape, thinning out whole branches as necessary. Heavy pruning results in more vigorous regrowth and more flowers.

HOW TO PRUNE SHRUBS

DECIDUOUS SHRUBS: First, remove long shoots that spoil the shrub's shape or that are broken, diseased, dead, or crossing other branches. Then thin out by cutting older branches back to the ground. You can follow a 3 or 5 year pruning cycle with deciduous shrubs. Removing about a third or a fifth of the mature wood each year will keep the plant open and allow new shoots to become major branches. the 3 year cycle of pruning old wood will produce more new shoots; the 5 year cycle is best for some slow-growing shrubs such as Lilac.

PRUNING HEDGES: Plants suitable for hedges can tolerate heavy pruning. To develop a healthy hedge, let the hedge plants grow undisturbed the first season. Vegetative growth will strengthen the developing roots. The following season, prune to 6 inches high to force growth at the bottom of the plant. After that, shear off about 1/2" whenever the hedge has grown 4". This allows it to grow as rapidly as possible but keeps it filled out. When the hedge reaches its desired height, slow its growth by shearing off all but 1/4" of new growth at each pruning.

Shape the hedge narrower at the top and wider at the bottom so sunlight can reach the bottom foliage and promote growth.

