

Shrub Pruning Calendar

prepared by Walter Reeves, The Georgia Gardener

Pruning is an important cultural practice for maintaining shrubs. There are several reasons for pruning. Sometimes you want to train or direct the growth of plants into a particular form or space. Or perhaps you want to prune mature plants to control their size and shape.

Most shrubs have a *best* and a *less best* time when they can be pruned. If you are not directly familiar with your shrubs, you may not know when one blooms and so might mistakenly prune it just before it flowers.

This pruning calendar gives you the preferred times to prune your shrubbery. Remember, though, that pruning out-of-schedule may sometimes be necessary. If your shrub is overgrown, a winter pruning may be needed, even though flowering in the following year will be affected.. Don't worry: mis-timed pruning is rarely the cause of plant death. You might remove flower buds or make a shrub less winter-hardy but these setbacks will not likely be fatal. Keep in mind that the chart indicates *best* times but does not mean you *must* prune.

Also keep in mind that pruning high on a shrub will not make it grow foliage close to the ground. If you want to stimulate growth, the pruning cut must be within 6" of where you want the new growth to occur.

For more information, download "Basic Principles of Pruning Woody Plants" at www.ces.uga.edu/pubcd/B949-W.HTML.

Legend:

Y = Best time to prune

N = Do not prune except to correct damage, hazards, or structural defects

Comments

1. Shear mid-season if a formal hedge is desired
2. Do not cut into old wood that has no leaves or needles
3. Fall/early winter pruning can reduce winter hardiness.
4. If a shrub is way too large for its space, severe pruning may be done in late February to mid-March. Unkempt Burford hollies, azaleas, boxwood, ligustrum and many other vigorous woody shrubs can be pruned to 12" (yes, that's twelve inches!) tall. Sprouts will arise from the stump by May. Pinch out the tips of the branches when they get 12" long. This will create a nice framework of low-to-the-ground limbs.

