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# LEARN THE BASICS of How and When to **PRUNE SHRUBS**

## Pruning Shrubs

### Pruning Techniques

## **PRUNE WITH A PURPOSE**

- Control size
- Improve form - growth habit
  - Renovating Overgrown Shrubs
- Remove diseased, insect infested, damaged, crossing or rubbing branches
- Increase flowering and fruiting
- Improve bark color

## **BEST TIME TO PRUNE DECIDUOUS SHRUBS**

- When the saw is sharp
  - Small and urgent jobs - though there are some factors to consider
- Late winter to early spring are great times to prune most plants
  - Easy to see the structure of the plant and make fewer, more precise cuts
  - Wounds close rapidly as growth will soon begin
  - Few insects and diseases to contend with at this time of the year
  - Increase hardiness by leaving plants stand
  - Enjoy winter interest while providing habitat for birds and butterflies
  - You'll only need to prune once if there is winter or animal damage
- Avoid
  - Leaf expansion when bark is more subject to damage
  - Late summer or fall that can stimulate late season growth

- Timing based on bloom time
  - Spring flowering shrubs like lilac and forsythia
    - For maximum bloom, prune these right after flowering
  - Summer flowering shrubs
    - Late winter / early spring
  - Evergreens
    - Only if needed
    - Select right size plant for the location
    - Avoid late summer or fall pruning
      - ◆ Exposes inner growth that will be more subject to winter injury
    - Pine
      - ◆ Remove  $1/2$  to  $2/3$  of candle growth in spring
    - Spruce
      - ◆ In spring above a healthy bud
    - Juniper
      - ◆ Feather pruning in spring removing wayward branches
      - ◆ Lightly in mid summer
    - Yew
      - ◆ Spring
      - ◆ Lightly in mid summer removing wayward branches
      - ◆ Pruning Overgrown Yew
    - Arborvitae
      - ◆ Spring
      - ◆ Avoid topping that results in multiple leaders and more winter damage

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When you visit Ebert's Greenhouse Village for the first time, you'll be charmed by our rustic ambiance and the beautiful surrounding countryside in Ixonia, Wisconsin. You'll meet our friendly and knowledgeable staff who share your passion for gardening and the rewarding, enjoyable life experience it provides!

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At Ebert's Greenhouse Village, "We Grow HAPPINESS!!"

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## WHERE TO MAKE CUTS

- 1/4" above an outward facing bud
  - Slanting down and away from bud
- Above shorter outward facing branch
- Back to the main stem
- Ground level for suckering shrubs
- Heading Cut - shortens individual branches
- Thinning Cut - removes branches

## TOOLS

- Safety glasses
- Leather gloves
  - Long sleeves or elbow high gauntlet gloves protect forearms from thorns and prickles
- Selecting the Right Pruning Tool for the Job
  - Bypass hand pruners
    - Usually cut branches up to 3/4"
    - Match to the size of your hand
    - Flex Dial
    - BP6130
  - Bypass loppers
    - Extend reach
    - Cut larger branches, most up to 2"
    - Classic Cut Bypass Lopper
    - Dual Link Forged Bypass Lopper
    - Compound Action Bypass Lopper
  - Saws
    - Teeth pointed backward - cuts on back stroke where you have greater power
    - RazorTOOTH Saw
    - Foldable saws

## PRUNING NEWLY PLANTED SHRUBS

- Minimal pruning
  - The more leaves the more energy produced to help establish plant
- Only remove
  - Broken and damaged branches
  - Crossing and rubbing branches
  - Diseased and insect infested

## MAINTENANCE PRUNING

- Proactive pruning to keep shrubs healthy and looking good
  - Start with dead and diseased stems
  - Remove any crossing, rubbing or inward facing stems
  - Reduce size by cutting one or two older stems to ground level
  - Prune a few longer branches back to shorter adjoining branches

## RENEWAL PRUNING

- For overgrown shrubs
- Suckering shrubs like red twig dogwood
  - Remove 1/4 of the older stems to ground level
  - Shorten the remaining stems as needed
  - Repeat over a 3 to 4 year period
  - Once renewed, switch to maintenance pruning



### About Melinda

Nationally known gardening expert, TV/radio host, author & columnist Melinda Myers has over 30 years of horticulture experience and has written over 20 gardening books, including Can't Miss Small Space Gardening, the Midwest Gardener's Handbook 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition released 2022, and Jackson and Perkins' Beautiful Roses Made Easy. She hosts the nationally-syndicated "Melinda's Garden Moment" program airing on over 115 TV and radio stations throughout the U.S. Melinda also hosts the internationally distributed Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" DVD series and Instant Video, including the latest Food Gardening for Everyone DVD set. She is a columnist and contributing editor for Birds & Blooms magazine, writes the twice monthly "Gardeners' Questions" newspaper column and a nationally-distributed gardening column. She appears regularly as a guest expert on national and local television and radio shows.

Visit Melinda's website,  
[melindamyers.com](http://melindamyers.com)

## **REJUVENATION PRUNING**

- Severely overgrown and tolerant of this type of pruning
- Shrubs that tolerate this type of pruning:
  - Forsythia
  - Snowball hydrangea
  - Rose of Sharon
  - Spirea
  - Lilac
- Remove all growth to ground level
  - Stimulates lots of new stems that will need thinning
  - Can result in an even taller plant than before pruning
    - Remove as much as  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the new growth to ground level
    - Reduce height as needed
- Switch to maintenance pruning once plants are the desired size and shape

## **ALTERNATIVE FOR SUMMER BLOOMING SPIREA, ANNABELLE HYDRANGEA, & POTENTILLA**

- Pruning Potentillas, Summer Blooming Spireas and Annabelle Hydrangeas
- This method reduces problems with floppy growth
  - Prune back all stems halfway or 12 to 15" above the ground
  - Prune 50% of the larger/older stems to ground level
  - Lightly shear summer blooming spirea after flowering
    - Encourages 2<sup>nd</sup>, even 3<sup>rd</sup> flush of bloom

## **PRUNING PANICLE HYDRANGEA**

- How to Prune Your Panicle Hydrangea in Fall
  - Minimal pruning needed
  - Leave at least  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the plant intact
  - Light pruning
    - Leave 1 to 3 buds per stouter stem above main framework

## **PRUNING BIGLEAF HYDRANGEA**

- Those in mild climates:
  - Minimal pruning - right after flowering if needed
- Those in cold climates growing repeat bloomers
  - Leave stand for winter and mulch
  - Remove mulch in spring and see what survives
  - Remove deadwood - often this is to ground level
- HYDRANGEA SELECTION, PRUNING & CARE

## **BUTTERFLY BUSH**

- Allow plants to stand for winter
  - Prune back to 4 to 6" above the ground
    - Above a healthy outward facing bud

## **CARYOPTERIS**

- Allow plants to stand for winter
  - Prune back to 12 to 18" above the ground
    - Remove any crossing, damaged or inward growing branches

## **HELPFUL RESOURCE**

- *The American Horticultural Society Pruning & Training* by Christopher Brickell & David Joyce

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## **UPCOMING APPEARANCES & WEBINARS**

*Check often as more appearances and webinars continue to be added.*

### **March 4<sup>th</sup>**

*Planning, Planting and Caring for Your Garden (2 presentations)*

[More Information](#)

### **March 8<sup>th</sup> Webinar**

*Grow Your Own Flowers for Bouquets in Containers, Raised Beds and Gardens*

### **March 11<sup>th</sup>**

*University of Illinois Master Gardener's Home, Lawn and Garden Day*

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### **March 15<sup>th</sup> Webinar**

*Create an Oasis On a Deck, Patio or Balcony*

### **March 18<sup>th</sup>**

*Spring into Gardening*

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### **March 22<sup>nd</sup> Webinar**

*In a Pot, You Can Grow a Lot!*

### **March 25<sup>th</sup>**

*2023 Outagamie Co. Master Gardener Association Garden Conference*

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### **March 29<sup>th</sup> Webinar**

*Understanding Gardening Basics to Boost Your Gardening Success*

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