

Forcing Branches Indoors

Bring spring indoors early. You need a few branches of spring flowering shrubs, clippers, and a lot of fresh water. You can begin to force branches one to two months before the shrubs would flower outdoors. Select branches you wish to cut. Consider the plants overall form since you are pruning the shrub. If possible select branches that cross, grow inward, grow straight up or branches that are misshapen.

Select branches with ample buds. Place the cut branches in warm water in a cool location, 60 -65 degrees Fahrenheit. Cut one inch from the base of the stem weekly and change the water several times a week. In a few days the branches will respond to the warmth in your house and begin to bloom. Branches cut closer to their natural outdoor bloom time will open faster indoors. Shrubs that work well are Forsythia, Quince, Magnolia, Witch Hazel, Bradford Pear, Sargent Cherry, and Lilac. For branches that are

stubborn to bloom, cut new branches and soak them in a tub of warm water submerged with a brick or other similar object for one half hour to one hour. Then cut the base of the stem one inch and place branches in a vase and follow the previous direction of water change and base trimming.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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