

PRUNING FLOWERING SHRUBS

Deciduous shrubs which bloom before June 10th should be pruned right after they finish blooming. Included in this group of shrubs is forsythia, honeysuckle and lilacs. Autumn or early spring pruning of these shrubs is not recommended because it removes the flower buds. It does not, however, harm the overall health of the shrub.

Shrubs which bloom after June 10th should be pruned as early in the spring as possible. This group of shrubs, which includes mock orange and rose-of-sharon, produces flowers on new growth.

When pruning to control the size and shape of the shrub, always cut back to a live bud. The new shoot will grow in the direction the bud points. You can train and shape the shrubs by thinning branches and stems and by pruning branches back to a bud to control the direction of the growth. Before you cut, look at the bud and try to imagine how the plant will look when the new shoots appear.

Avoid shearing shrubs, unless you intend to make a hedge. When pruning hedges, the top of the hedge should be narrower than the bottom, to allow light to penetrate the shrub. If you are not making a hedge, cut each branch individually. Although this takes longer, you will end up with a more naturally looking shrub which does not need to be pruned as often.

When pruning out diseased branches, it is more important to sterilize your pruners between cuts. This can be done by dipping the pruners in a solution of 1-part bleach to 9 parts water. This will prevent spreading disease to healthy branches.

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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