

List of Common Flowering Shrubs and their Pruning Needs

Group 1: Spring flowering shrubs – bloom on growth formed last year

Group 2: Summer flowering shrubs – bloom on current year's growth

Group 3: Flower on perennial spurs on older wood

Barberry – *Group 1.* Limit pruning to removal of dead or weak growth and to direct growth away from an area the plant is encroaching into. It can be sheared if turned into a hedge, otherwise prune after flowering. Larger, older canes can be removed at the ground to provide room for new vigorous sprouts.

Broom – *Group 1.* Best to prune annually after bloom, just as pods are starting to set. Cut back two thirds of last year's growth. This also has the benefit of reducing or eliminating the ugly seed pods and results in more vigorous growth and better bloom next year. Cutting back into large, old, hardwood will often not re-sprout. Many people replace old, overgrown plants that have gotten leggy, straggly, and overgrown. Low growing varieties best left alone.

Buddleia – *Group 2.* Prune back to 4" to 12" tall in early spring before new growth starts. This yields larger, more spectacular flower clusters as well as keeping the plant smaller and more compact. It also avoids the development of large plants full of dead wood and small branches that bloom poorly. Young plants pruned in this manner may be exceptionally vigorous but will slow down as they mature.

Alternate Leaf Buddleia is a *Group 1* plant that blooms on one year old wood. Left alone it will develop a lot of dead twiggy growth in the interior of the plant. Once the plant has achieved mature size, prune it annually after blooming to remove any dead growth and to cut back old flowering shoots back to vigorous new growth.

Cotoneaster – *Group 1.* Limit pruning to removal of dead or weak growth and to direct growth away from an area the plant is encroaching into. It can be sheared if turned into a hedge, otherwise prune after flowering.

Dogwood (shrubby types) – *Group 1.* Keep an eye on the plant. As canes become old (more than 1–1½" in diameter) saw them off close to the ground to provide room for new vigorous sprouts arising from the base. This is especially important in maintaining vibrant stem colors during the winter, as older canes develop a drab gray bark. An alternative method is to annually cut the entire plant down to under 6" of the ground in early spring. This keeps the plant smaller and it will consistently have brightly colored stems in the winter. This is the best way to prune 'Kelsey' dogwood.

Elder – *Group 2.* Prune back to 6"-12" tall in early spring before new growth starts. This yields lush, full new growth and heavier flowering as well as keeping the plant smaller and more compact. It also avoids the build-up of woody, ratty, old growth that detracts from the plant's appearance. Can leave the plant to grow but it will thin out at the base, exposing stems. Can rejuvenate every 5 to 8 years with a hard pruning down of the entire plant. If a taller plant is desired, can do a 'two year' pruning. After the first growing season, the new shoots which arose from the base are cut back half way in early spring. The two year old shoots that were pruned in this way last year are removed at the base.

Euonymus – *Group 1.* Limit pruning to removal of dead or weak growth and to direct growth away from an area the plant is encroaching into. Prune after flowering in the spring.

Forsythia – *Group 1*. Keep an eye on the plant. As canes become old (more than 1-1½” in diameter) saw them off close to the ground to provide room for vigorous sprouts arising from the base. It’s important to keep up on this as the plant can quickly develop a wild, unkempt, “bad hair day” look if neglected too long. Pruning usually done immediately after flowering.

Hibiscus (Rose of Sharon) – *Group 2*. Limit pruning to removal of dead or weak growth, and to direct growth away from an area the plant is encroaching into. Overgrown specimens may be thinned and cut back quite hard in the spring. Old wood can yield vigorous shoots.

Honeysuckle – *Group 1*. Keep an eye on the plant. As canes become old (more than 1-1½” in diameter) saw them off close to the ground to provide room for new vigorous sprouts arising from the base.

Hydrangea – *Group 1 or 2*. Pruning depends on the type you have. Most of the semi-hardy big leafed types (*Group 1*) set flower buds on the tips of last year’s growth. It’s important to mulch them over the winter to protect this growth to ensure flowering the following year. Cutting back the canes that flowered the past year to the ground in early spring will encourage new growth that will flower the following year.

The hardier types (*Group 2*) such as “Pee Gee” and “Annabelle” bloom best when cut down to 4”-8” in the early spring leaving two to four buds from last year’s growth. Left un-pruned, these Hydrangeas will produce sparser and smaller flower clusters.

Lilac – *Group 1*. Keep an eye on the plant. As canes become old (more than 1-1½” in diameter) saw them off close to the ground to provide room for new vigorous sprouts arising from the base. Many people, in ignorance, do just the opposite: they keep the larger, older canes and remove the young green sprouts that arise from the base. You eventually end up with a clump of base stems topped by a fringe of green foliage at the top that yields sparse flowers. Take a close look at the plant every spring to see if there are any canes to remove. You may not need to cut one out every year, but look every year to make that decision. Do not shear these plants.

Mockorange – *Group 1*. Mockorange has a tendency to get woody, ratty, and sparse without pruning. Cutting back or removal of the older stems is important to yield fresh, lush new growth. A good general guideline is to not have any growth older than five year on the plant. Prune immediately after flowering.

Nineback – *Group 1*. Limit pruning to removal of dead or weak growth, and to direct growth away from an area the plant is encroaching into. These can be pruned like the lilacs but you lose the attractive peeling bark that develops on these older canes.

Potentilla – *Group 2*. Prune back to 4”-8” tall in early spring before new growth starts. This yields lush full new growth and heavier flowering as well as keeping the plant smaller and more compact. It also avoids the build-up of woody, ratty, old growth that detracts from the plant’s appearance.

Privet – *Group 2*. Little, if any pruning is needed. Limit pruning to removal of dead or weak growth, and to direct growth away from an area the plant is encroaching into. It can be sheared if turned into a hedge, otherwise prune prior to flowering in the early spring. Prune so that the upper part of the plant is narrower than the base to allow enough light to keep the base of the plant full and thick.

Prunus – *Group 3*. Limit pruning to removal of dead or weak growth, and to direct growth away from an area the plant is encroaching into. Any pruning best done immediately after flowering, shearing should not be done long term.

Pyracantha – *Group 1*. It's best to site the plant properly which will reduce or eliminate the need for regular pruning. Pyracanthas get to be large shrubs, and trying to squeeze them into a confined spot result in unpleasant encounters with this thorny monster. The plant will look its best with little, if any pruning. Any pruning is best done right after blooming. Since the main ornament is from the berries, limiting the growth pruned is desirable, since pruning lots of growth that has just flowered will reduce the berry display.

Quince – *Group 3*. Limit pruning to removal of dead or weak growth, and to direct growth away from an area the plant is encroaching into. These can be pruned like lilacs.

Rhododendron – *Group 1*. Limit pruning to removal of dead or weak growth, and to direct growth away from an area the plant is encroaching into. Rhododendrons set big, fat flower buds on the tops of last year's growth. Growth can be contained by pruning after flowering. Make the pruning cuts on the longer shoots back into the interior of the plant to hide cuts.

Rose – *Group 1 or 2*. Other, species type roses (one bloom season per year) bloom on previous year's growth. Keep an eye on the plant. As canes become old (more than 1-1½" in diameter), saw them off close to the ground to provide room for new vigorous sprouts arising from the base.

For hybrid shrub roses (those that have recurrent bloom), prune back to 6"-12" tall in early spring just as new growth starts. Remove older, larger canes (1-1½" + diameter) close to the ground to provide room for new vigorous sprouts from the base. This yields lush, full new growth and heavier flowering as well as keeping the plant smaller and more compact. It also avoids the build-up of woody, ratty, old growth that detracts from the plant's appearance. This pruning can be done every one to five years depending on the desired look. Removal of spent flowers and hips in early to mid summer will hasten a second or even a third bloom.

Serviceberry – *Group 1*. Limit pruning to removal of dead or weak growth, and to direct growth away from an area the plant is encroaching into. Serviceberry can become quite large in time, and their size can be limited by sawing older, larger (1-1½" + diameter) off close to the ground to provide room for new vigorous sprouts arising from the base.

Spirea – *Group 1 or 2*. The spring flowering types like 'Van Houtte', 'Snowmount', and 'Halward's Silver' (*Group 1*) should be pruned by cutting out a portion of the older wood after flowering to make room for younger growth that will flower next year.

The summer blooming varieties like "Anthony Waterer", 'Frobel' and 'Goldflame' (*Group 2*) should be pruned back to 4"-8" tall in early spring before new growth starts. This yields lush, full new growth and heavier flowering as well as keeping the plant smaller and more compact. It also avoids the build-up of woody, ratty, old growth that detracts from the plant's appearance.

Spirea, Blue Mist – *Group 2*. Prune back 4”-8” tall in early spring before new growth starts. This yields lush, full new growth and heavier flowering as well as keeping the plant smaller and more compact. It also avoids the build-up of woody, ratty, old growth that detracts from the plant’s appearance.

Sumac – *Group 1*. Limit pruning to removal of dead or weak growth, and to direct growth away from an area the plant is encroaching into.

Viburnum – *Group 1*. On most Viburnums limit pruning to removal of dead or weak growth, and to direct growth away from an area the plant is encroaching into.

Keep an eye on Snowball Viburnum. As canes become old (more than 1-1½” in diameter), saw them off close to the ground right after flowering to provide room for new vigorous sprouts arising from the base. Many people, in ignorance, do just the opposite: they keep the larger, older canes and remove the young green sprouts that arise from the base. You eventually end up with a clump of bare stems topped by a fringe of green foliage at the top that yields sparse flowers.

Weigela – *Group 1*. Weigela has a tendency to get woody, ratty, and sparse without pruning. Cutting back or removal of the older stems is important to yield fresh, lush new growth. A good general guideline is to not to have any growth older than five years on the plant. Prune immediately after flowering.

Willow – *Group 1*. Limit pruning to removal of dead or weak growth, and to direct growth away from an area the plant is encroaching into. Keep an eye on the plant, especially Pussywillow. As canes become old (more than 1-1½” in diameter), saw them off close to the ground to provide room for new vigorous sprouts arising from the base.