



Durham Master Gardeners: Pruning Tip Sheet

Spring flowering trees and shrubs: Should be pruned shortly after the flowers begin to fade. Removing spent blooms helps to redirect the plants energy into making bigger blooms for next season. Examples of spring flowering shrubs include: forsythia, magnolia, viburnum, lilacs, rhododendrons, azaleas and many more.

Summer flowering trees and shrubs: Are best pruned in late winter or early spring, before growth appears. Examples include: Rose of Sharon, Snowberry, St. Johnswort, 'Pee Gee' Hydrangeas, smooth Hydrangeas such as 'Annabelle', Buddleia and others.

Roses: When to prune your roses depends largely on whether they bloom on old or new wood and whether they bloom just once in the season or repeatedly. Generally all roses should be pruned to open the center of the plant to both light and air circulation; Make your cuts at a 45-degree angle, about 1/4 inch above an out facing bud; Also remove any broken, dead, dying or diseased wood as well as any crossing or badly placed branches; Remove sucker growth below the graft and remove any weak or twiggy branches thinner than a pencil. This type of pruning should be done in late winter or early spring. When your forsythia is blooming you will know it is time to prune your roses.

– **hybrid tea roses:** The ones with the large single blooms that gardeners have grown to both curse and love should be pruned hard in late winter or early spring. Dead head these roses throughout the growing season to encourage additional blooms, but stop pruning about 6 weeks before the first expected hard freeze to give the roses a chance to harden off before winter.

– For once **blooming climbers and shrub roses**, prune when the flowers begin to fade. For **repeat bloomers**, prune in late winter or early spring and dead head and lightly prune throughout the growing season.

Deciduous Trees: – Late winter early spring is the best time to prune the majority of deciduous trees. At this time there are fewer insects and diseases to invade the open wounds and pruning cuts are quick to heal. It is also much easier to see the shape and inspect the health of the limbs without all of the foliage getting in the way. Trees you should prune at this time include: Aspen, Burning bush, Elder, Ginkgo, Hazelnut, Linden, Mayday, Mountain Ash, Poplar, Willows, Holly, Honey locust and more.

– A group of trees generally not recommended for early spring pruning are known as "**bleeders**". These are better pruned in summer when they are in full leaf. During late winter and early spring the sap is rising, and will "bleed" from open wounds. This does not harm to the tree but can make for an unsightly and sticky mess and cause damage to buildings and vehicles below. Maple is the most common and famous in this group of trees, which also includes birch, beech, oaks, walnuts, lindens, and elms

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Fruit trees: Renovation and maintenance pruning are best done in late winter, while the trees are still dormant. Later on in the season, around mid-June, it is often necessary to remove excess fruit by hand while it is still very small. Fruit thinning reduces limb breakage; increases fruit size, improves the colour and quality of remaining fruit, and stimulates flower initiation for next year's crop.

Evergreen trees and shrubs: Such as cedars, junipers, spruce, firs, pines and boxwood are best pruned when actively growing (which is usually around mid-June). However they may be lightly pruned in early spring to remove any winter-killed tips. Yews may usually be pruned anywhere from early spring to late summer.

Vines:

***Clematis*:** are pruned in one of 3 ways depending upon its season of bloom and weather it blooms on old wood or new.

Group 1: Contains some of the most vigorous clematis. They flower on old wood. Although this group does not require pruning (other than to remove deadwood), you may wish to prune in order to control its size. Any pruning should be completed as soon as flowering has finished. 'Alpina' and 'Montana' *Clematis* are 2 examples.

Group 2: Contains the early and mid-season large flowered hybrids which usually begin flowering before the end of June. They also flower on old wood. The only pruning usually required in this group is to prune out dead wood in late winter/early spring. To do this prune back to (just above) a plump pair of buds. There are many clematis in this group such as: 'Nelly Moser', 'Niobe', 'Henryi', 'The President' and 'Multi Blue'.

Group 3: Contains late flowering species and hybrids. These flower on new wood and should be cut back hard (approximately 30cm (12") from ground level) in late winter/early spring. This also is a large group including clematis such as 'Pink Fantasy', 'Polish Spirit', 'Jackmanii', and 'Rouge Cardinal'.

***Wisteria*:** Prune the entire plant back after flowering is finished, thinning it out well and leaving just one or two buds or nodes per branch. In mid-summer give the vine a good hard pruning to maintain desired size and shape. Give it a final pruning in mid-September (or when growth has slowed, due to the onset of cooler temperatures). This time, leave four or five nodes or buds per branch; these will form next year's flowers and branches.

Virginia creepers, ivies, hops and grapes (are all pruned in late winter or early spring).

Grasses: Although grasses may be pruned in late autumn many gardeners enjoy the look of grasses in their winter landscape. Grasses left to stand over winter are best pruned in late winter or early spring before new growth begins.