

Spring Pruning

Late winter and spring flowering shrubs bear their flowers on wood they produced the previous growing season. That means they're best pruned (if at all) immediately after flowering, before next seasons flower buds are formed. In cold climates it's wise to delay pruning until the risk of frost damage is over, even though this may delay flowering.

Trees are pruned mainly to remove diseased, damaged or close crossing branches. Take care not to spoil a tree's natural shape, and think twice before cutting into larger branches. Mature trees are easily ruined with heavy-handed pruning, but young trees are often pruned to manipulate shape. Lower branches may be removed to allow space underneath or open up a view.

Deciduous shrubs are cut back to a strong pair of buds or a single outward facing bud. Remove all weak and damaged wood and thin by removing the oldest branches first. Early spring bloomers such as Deutzia, Forsythia, Kerria, and Spiraea should be pruned back hard after flowering. Cut out old canes to ground level or just above an emerging cane. Hydrangeas should be pruned to just above the lowest set of plump buds.

Camellias generally do not require pruning except to restrict overall size. However, old bushes are tolerant of hard pruning. This may promote a surplus of new growth which needs to be rubbed off soon after it emerges to leave a good framework of evenly spaced branches. Rhododendrons may be pruned to encourage more compact growth, although this may be at the expense of next season's flowers.

While vigorous growing evergreens will often rejuvenate as new when pruned hard down to bare wood, it pays to be wary of pruning into old wood that has no leaves, especially with conifers, and lavenders. Picking flowers is best method of pruning daphne.