

# When to Prune Ornamentals

## WINTER: *after hard freezes: plants truly dormant*

- \* thin crowns of mature trees; remove dead or storm damaged limbs.
- \* clip hedges to retain clean lines.
- \* in late winter rejuvenate shrubs that are out-of-bounds.

## EARLY SPRING: *just before bud break*

- \* best time to prune roses and summer-flowering shrubs: rose-of-Sharon, glossy abelia, *Buddleia* (butterfly bush), *Cornus* (dogwood species with brightly colored stems), *Hypericum* (St. John's wort), privet, *Potentilla* (cinquefoil), *Sorbaria* (false spirea), *Spiraea bumalda*, *S. billardii*, and *Symphoricarpos* (snowberry).
- \* head back growth of random-branched conifer species: junipers, *Chamaeryparis* (false cypress), yews and arborvitae.
- \* train young shade trees planted the previous year by selecting scaffold branches, removing others.
- \* preferred time to rejuvenate evergreen and deciduous shrubs and hedges that are out of bounds.
- \* best time to annually prune most vines.
- \* alternate time to thin mature trees.
- \* avoid pruning species prone to bleeding (maples, birches and yellowwood).

## SPRING: *bud break*

- \* best not to prune any woody plants at this time due to translocation of carbohydrates and growth hormones to growing points.

## SPRING/EARLY SUMMER: *leaves fully expanded*

- \* rub off trunk buds that will give rise to suckers and water sprouts.
- \* prune spring-flowering shrubs soon after blooming period: azaleas, *Deutzia*, pearlbrush, *Forsythia*, *Kerria*, *Kolkwitzia* (beauty bush), ninebark, *Philadelphus* (mock orange), *Rhododendron*,

*Spiraea arguta* (bridal-wreath spirea), *S. thunbergii*, *S. vanhouttei*, and *Weigela*.

\*for more compact growth, pinch out one-half of the new growth of pines, spruces, and firs.

\* clip back the terminals of vigorous new shoots as well as spent flowers in eraceous species (*Rhododendron*, azaleas, mountain laurel, andromeda): this will keep plants compact and encourage production of side shoots and flower buds.

\* evergreen shrubs or hedges that were pruned heavily in late winter or early spring can be trimmed now to re-establish clean lines.

## SUMMER: *new shoots reach full growth and start to become woody.*

- \* preferred time to perform major thinning operations on crab apples, callery pear, ornamental cherries and plums, honey locust, spruce, willow, and poplars to reduce susceptibility to trunk cankers.
- \* rework the interiors of tree-form dogwoods to remove overly shaded, crisscrossed, or weak branches.
- \* alternate time to rejuvenate hedges.

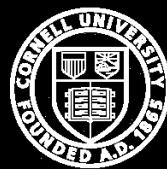
## EARLY FALL: *new shoots fully mature; early stages of fall color*

- \* heavy pruning at this time can result in stimulation of new shoots that may not properly harden before winter; limit pruning to the removal of damaged or dead wood, especially on conifers.
- \* wisteria may be pruned at this time.

## LATE FALL: *after several hard frosts*

- \* clip away excess ivy growth on building walls and around windows: English ivy, Boston ivy and Virginia creeper.
- \* alternate time to perform major pruning of noncanker-prone species.

## APPROPRIATE TIMES TO PRUNE WOODY ORNAMENTALS



Cornell University  
Cooperative Extension  
Orange County

Cornell University Cooperative Extension provides equal program and employment opportunities.

Agriculture  
Family & Consumer Sciences  
4-H Youth Development

Garden Helpline: 845-343-0664  
18 Seward Ave, Ste. 300  
Middletown, NY 10940-1919  
845-344-1234  
Mon.-Fri., 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM  
[www.cce.cornell.edu/orange](http://www.cce.cornell.edu/orange)

Alder:	late winter, spring, summer	Honeylocust:	late winter, spring, early summer
Apple:	late winter, early summer	Honeysuckle:	late winter, spring, summer
Arborvitae:	late winter, sprng, early summer	Juniper:	late winter, spring, early summer
Azalea:	late spring	Katsura tree:	late winter, spring early summer
Beech:	late winter, spring, early summer	Laurel:	early spring
Birch:	late spring, early summer	Lilac:	late spring, early summer
Catalpa:	late spring, early summer	Magnolia:	late spring, early summer
Cedrus:	late winter, spring, summer	Maple:	late spring, early summer
Cephaloraxus:	late winter, spring, summer	Mountain ash:	late spring, early summer
Chamaecyparis:	late winter, spring, summer	Peach:	late winter, early summer
Cherry:	late winter, early summer	Pine:	Middle to late spring
Chestnut:	late winter, spring, early summer	Poplar:	late winter, spring, summer
Chokeberry:	late spring, summer	Privet:	late winter, spring, summer
Cotoneaster:	spring	Pyracantha:	late winter, early spring
Cryptomeria:	late winter, spring	Quince:	late spring, early summer
Cytisus:	late spring, early summer	Rhododendron:	late spring, early summer
Dogwood:	late spring	Rose:	late winter, early spring
Elm:	late winter, spring, early summer	Shadblow:	late spring
Fir:	late winter, spring, early summer	Spirea:	late spring, early summer
Forsythia:	late spring, early summer	Viburnum:	late spring, early summer
Heather:	early summer	Witch Hazel:	late spring
Hackberry:	late winter, spring, early summer	Willow:	late winter, spring, early summer
Hawthron:	late winter, spring, early summer	Wisteria:	late spring, early summer
Hickory:	late winter, spring, early summer	Yew:	late winter, spring, early summer
Holly:	late winter, spring, early summer	Zelkova:	spring, early summer