

Heading and Thinning of Foliage Plants – These shrubs are usually known for their foliage, not their flowers. The best time for pruning them is during the **late winter before new growth begins** in the spring. “Nipping and clipping” can be done throughout the growing season.

Pruning Trees & Shrubs

Enhancing the Health & Beauty of Your Ornamentals

Plant	Pruning Time	Comment
Anise (Illicium)	Jan, Feb, Dec	
Arborvitae	Jan – Jul, Nov, Dec	2
Acuba	Apr – Aug	
Barberry, deciduous & evergreen	May – Jul	
Boxwood	Jan – Jul, Nov, Dec	1
Broom (Cytisus)	Jun, Jul	
Cherry Laurel	Jan – Jul, Nov, Dec	1
Cleyera	Mar - May	1
Cotoneaster, deciduous & evergreen	Jan, Feb, Nov, Dec	
Eleagnus	Jan – Aug, Nov, Dec	
Euonymus, deciduous	Jan – Mar, Nov, Dec	
Euonymus, evergreen	Jan – Jul, Nov, Dec	1
Fatsia	Mar – May	
Harry Lauder’s Walking Stick	May - Jul	
Holly, evergreen	Jan – Aug, Dec	1
Holly, deciduous	Jan, Feb, Dec	
Juniper	Jan – Jul, Nov, Dec	2
Laurel, English	Jan – Mar, Dec	1
Mahonia (Oregon Grapeholly)	Apr – Sept	
Photinia	Jan, May – Aug	1
Pittosporum	Feb – May	
Plum Yew, Japanese	Jan – Sep	
Podocarpus	Jan – Sep	3
Privet, evergreen (Ligustrum)	Jan – Aug	1, 3
Sumac	Jan – Mar, Aug – Dec	
Wax myrtle	Jan – Aug	3
Yew	Jan – Jul	1, 3

1. Shear in midseason if formal hedge is desired.
2. Do not cut into old wood that has no leaves or needles.
3. Fall/early winter pruning can reduce winter hardiness.

The primary sources of information for this brochure are an article by Walter Reeves, published in the Atlanta Journal & Constitution 12/12/03; <http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/B949-W.html>, an on-line publication prepared by G.L. Wade and Robert R. Westerfield, University of Georgia Extension Horticulturists; and <http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/C628-w.htm>, an on-line publication prepared by Kim D. Coder, Extension Forester, Warnell School of Forest Resources.

Pruning is one of the most important cultural practices for maintaining woody plants, including ornamental trees, shrubs, and fruits. It involves both art and science: art in making the pruning cuts properly and shaping your plant skillfully, and science in knowing how and when to prune for maximum benefits. The main reasons for pruning are to:



- Maintain the desired size or shape of a plant
- Train or direct growth of a young plant
- Improve growth, flowering, or fruiting
- Cut back overgrowth or overcrowding of an established plant
- Mitigate damage from insects, disease, or injury

TOOLS

What You Need	What You Don't Need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bypass-bladed hand pruners for branches smaller than your thumb • Long-handled, bypass-bladed lopping shears for branches ½ to 2 inches in diameter • Pruning saw (D-grip, crescent grip, folding saw, or bow saw) • Pole saw for high branches • Manual hedge shears 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electric hedge shears – They do more damage than good. • Wound dressings – They are primarily cosmetic, and many can disrupt the tree’s ability to seal off wound sites.

TECHNIQUES

Role of Plant Hormones – Understanding generally how hormones regulate growth will help you make decisions on how and where to make your pruning cuts. The hormone *auxin* directs growth upward by suppressing lateral (outward) bud growth. Hormone concentrations at the base of a branch or bud promote healing. Where you cut along the stem or branch can make the difference between increasing the health and vigor of the plant or increasing the chance of rot and disease/insect attack.

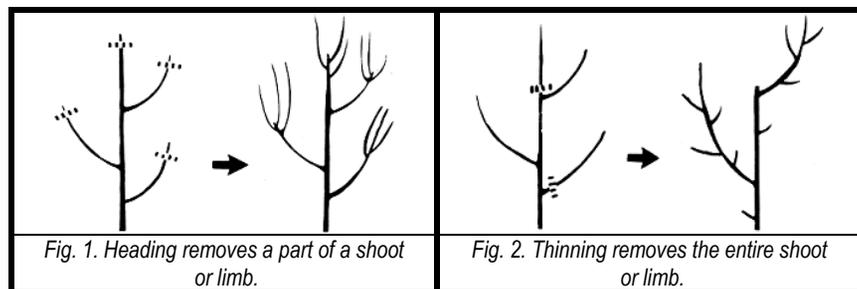
*Georgia Mountains
Master Gardeners*



Types of Pruning Cuts – There are two basic types of pruning cuts: (1) heading and (2) thinning. Both types of cuts control size and shape, but each results in a different growth response and has specific uses. Before you start, be sure your tools are sharp and clean.

Heading removes the terminal portion of shoots or limbs (Fig. 1) and stimulates regrowth near the cut. It also is the most invigorating type of pruning cut, resulting in thick compact growth and a loss of natural form, as in the case of a formally pruned hedge. Many broadleaf shrubs such as burford holly, ligustrum, abelia and crape myrtle tolerate this type of pruning.

Thinning, on the other hand, removes some entire shoots or limbs to their points of origin from the main branch or lateral (Fig. 2), while other shoot tips are left undistributed. As a result, new growth occurs normally at the undisturbed shoot tips. Thinning is generally the least invigorating type of pruning cut and provides the most natural growth form of plants. Important in maintenance pruning, thinning cuts are used to shorten limbs, to improve light penetration into plants, and to direct the growth of shoots or limbs.



Renewal pruning is an option for large-growing shrubs in the wrong location. Cut plants back to within 6 to 12 inches of the ground just as spring growth is beginning. This will promote lateral branches and compact growth. For a tree that has become too shrubby, you can lift the canopy by cutting off the lower branches. Renewal pruning also includes removing suckers and watersprouts, and removing shoots that are crossing each other or competing for dominance. Note: Do *not* do renewal pruning on boxwoods or conifers.

Pruning vines and ground covers can be done if their canopy grows too dense, if they have grown out of bounds, or if they need rejuvenating after winter damage. Vines that are growing in trees or competing with other plants may need severe pruning.

Pruning hedges should begin when the plants are planted to encourage compact growth habit. An informal hedge assumes natural growth form and is relatively low maintenance. A formal hedge needs frequent hand shearing to develop and maintain a pyramid shape so light reaches the lower canopy.

TIMING

Time of pruning varies with plant species. Prune at times that best complement the growth characteristics, flowering, and other objectives you desire.

Corrective and Renewal Pruning – Prune to correct damage, hazards, or structural defects at any time. Do renewal pruning in early spring as new growth is just beginning.

Heading and Thinning of Spring-Flowering Shrubs – These set bloom buds on the previous year's wood. Prune shrubs that bloom *before* May **after they have bloomed**.

Heading and Thinning of Summer-Flowering Shrubs – These form flower buds on this year's new growth. Prune shrubs that bloom *after* May during the **late winter before new growth begins**.

Prune Before Spring Growth Begins	Prune After Flowering	
Abelia	Almond, flowering	Jasmine, winter
Beautyberry	Azalea	Kerria
Buckeye, bottlebrush	Banana Shrub	Leucothoe
Butterfly Bush	Beautybush	Lilac
Chaste Tree (<i>Vitex</i>)	Bradford Pear	Lorapetalum
Cranberrybush Viburnum	Camelia	Magnolia, Saucer
Crape Myrtle	Clematis	Magnolia, Star
Fragrant Tea Olive	Climbing Roses	Mock Orange
Goldenrain Tree	Crabapple	Mountain Laurel
Hydrangea:	Daphne, winter	Pieris
Peegee (<i>h. paniculata</i> 'Grandiflora')	Deutzia	Pearlbush
Smooth (<i>h. arborescens</i> 'Annabelle')	Dogwood	Pussy Willow
Japanese Barberry	Doublefile Vibernum	Pyracantha
Mimosa	Flowering Almond	Quince
Nandina	Flowering Cherry	Redbud
Oleander	Flowering Quince	Rhododendron
Roses, Floribunda	Forsythia	Rose, climbing
Roses, Grandiflora	Fothergilla	Spirea, spring bloom
Roses, Shrub	Gardenia	Sweetshrub
Rose-of-Sharon (<i>Althea</i>)	Honeysuckle	Sweetspire (<i>Itea</i>)
Smoke Tree	Hydrangea:	Viburnum
Sourwood	Bigleaf (<i>h. macrophylla</i>)	Weigelia
Spirea, summer bloom	Climbing (<i>h. anomola petiolaris</i>)	Wintersweet
St. John's Wort (<i>Hypericum</i>)	Oakleaf (<i>h. quercifolia</i>)	Wisteria
Summersweet (<i>Clethra</i>)	Indian Hawthorne	Witchazel