



# PRUNING SHRUBS



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The goal of pruning is to maintain or enhance the beauty of a shrub without harming its health. The methods used to attain this vary depending on the condition of the shrub and the desired look.

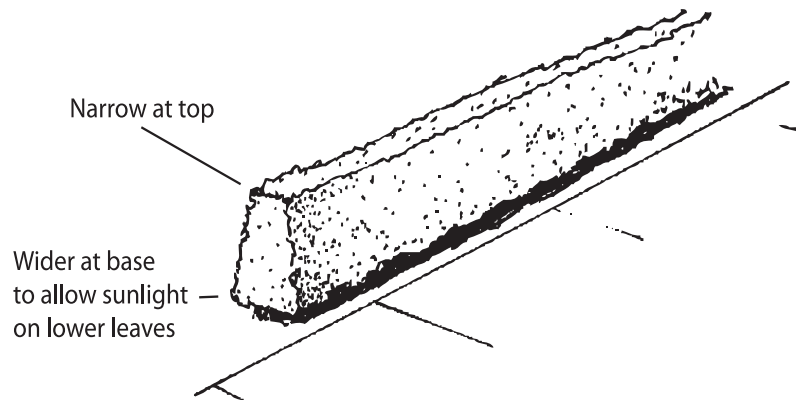
Whenever possible, try to let the plant maintain its natural habit. Make sure you know what that habit is for the particular shrub. Sometimes landscape shrubs need to be contained, and you will want to prune them. Make sure tools are clean and sharp and take appropriate safety precautions.

## When to Prune

Light pruning (where no more than 10 percent of the shrub is removed) can be done anytime of year. Timing for more severe pruning is determined by when the shrub flowers. Shrubs that bloom early in the spring such as lilac, forsythia, and mockorange are often pruned immediately after flowering to preserve enjoyment of the flowers. Shrubs that flower in summer or those grown for foliage are normally pruned



*Light Pruning*



*Shearing*

early in the spring before growth begins. It is important to note whether the plant is coniferous. If you cut a conifer, it may not grow back. Conifers (juniper, pine, spruce) do not have dormant buds on older wood, so they do not resprout behind pruning cuts. Most broadleaved shrubs resprout vigorously due to the many dormant buds along the stem.

## Light Pruning

Light pruning is done to improve the attractiveness of a shrub or to control its height and can be done anytime of year on most shrubs. Start by removing all dead and diseased branches. Branches that cross or are out of place are the next to go. A few older canes or branches that have lost vigor can also be removed. Do not take out more than 10 percent of a shrub when light pruning. Dead wood does not count in this 10 percent.

## Shearing

Shearing is used in formal landscapes but takes a great deal of time to maintain. Homeowners are usually better served by using another pruning method. Though some shrubs tolerate shearing, most react by producing thick, new growth along the sheared edges leaving the rest of the plant looking thin and sparse. Even shrubs adapted to shearing will have lower branches die or thin unless the lower portions of the shrub are maintained wider at the base than the top so that the upper portions of the shrub do not shade the lower. Examples of shrubs that are often pruned this way include boxwood, juniper, and arborvitae.

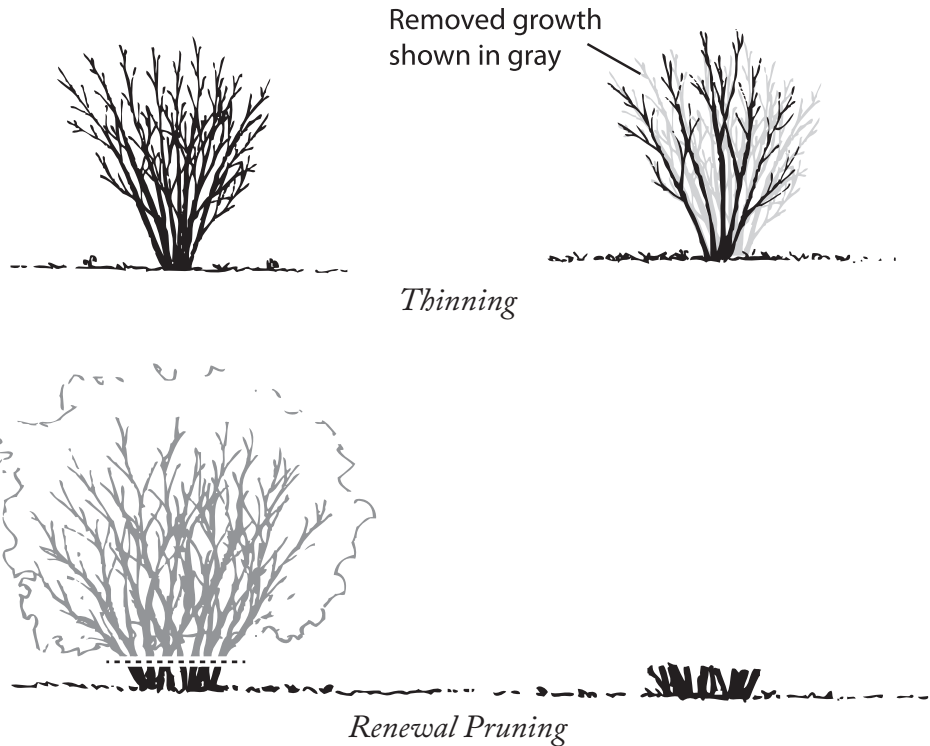
## Heading Back

Excessively long canes are cut back to a side branch or bud to reduce overall height. This method encourages new growth to appear just inside the pruning cut and gives the shrub a fuller, more

pleasing effect. If pruning to a bud, choose one that points in the direction you wish new growth to go. Examples of plants that can benefit from heading back include azaleas, roses, and junipers.

### Thinning

Canes are removed to reduce height and open the plant to encourage more interior growth. Older, less vigorous canes are removed first. Cut canes to be removed at ground level. Examples include forsythia, lilac, crapemyrtle, and bayberry. Many shrubs benefit from a combination of heading back and thinning cuts.



### Renewal (Rejuvenation)

#### Pruning

Shrubs will sometimes become so overgrown that thinning will not be adequate. Some shrubs tolerate renewal pruning in which all growth is taken back to about 6-inch stubs. This type of pruning is a stress to the plant and should be done in very early spring before the new growth starts. Regrowth from spring pruning will be rapid

and will soon cover the stubs. If you wish a more compact, fuller shrub, prune off the tips of the new growth as it reaches 6 to 12 inches long. Flowering shrubs normally do not flower the year following renewal pruning.

Shrubs that do not respond well to renewal pruning are best removed

and replaced if they outgrow their space. Examples include almost all conifers including junipers and pines.

Shrubs that tolerate rejuvenation include lilac, forsythia, barberry, sweet mockorange, scarlet firethorn, spirea, viburnums, weigela, and yew.

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