

Pruning Ornamental Shrubs



Reasons for Pruning:

1. Remove dead or diseased wood
2. Eliminate structural problems
(e.g. crossing branches)
3. Eliminate hazards (e.g. pedestrian conflicts)
4. Improve flower display
5. Increase light levels in interior
6. Reduce plant size
7. Aesthetics (shaping)



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Major considerations:

1. **HOW** does the shrub grow? (does it have a main trunk or is it a cane producing plant with multiple trunks)
2. **WHEN** does the shrub flower? (does it bloom in the spring, summer or fall)



Fit the pruning shears to
the job.

Prune based on shrub habit. How does the plant grow?



Cane producing shrubs benefit from rejuvenation pruning



Cane Producing Shrubs

(plant rejuvenates readily from the ground)

Mockorange

Forsythia

Redtwig dogwood

Bigleaf hydrangea

Japanese Kerria

Spiraea

Deutzia

Flowering quince

Nandina

Itea

Abelia

Butterfly bush

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Cane producing shrubs respond well to renewal pruning. Renewal pruning rejuvenates the plant and typically results in better flowering and fruiting.

Renewal pruning involves removing the largest branches or canes at the ground line.

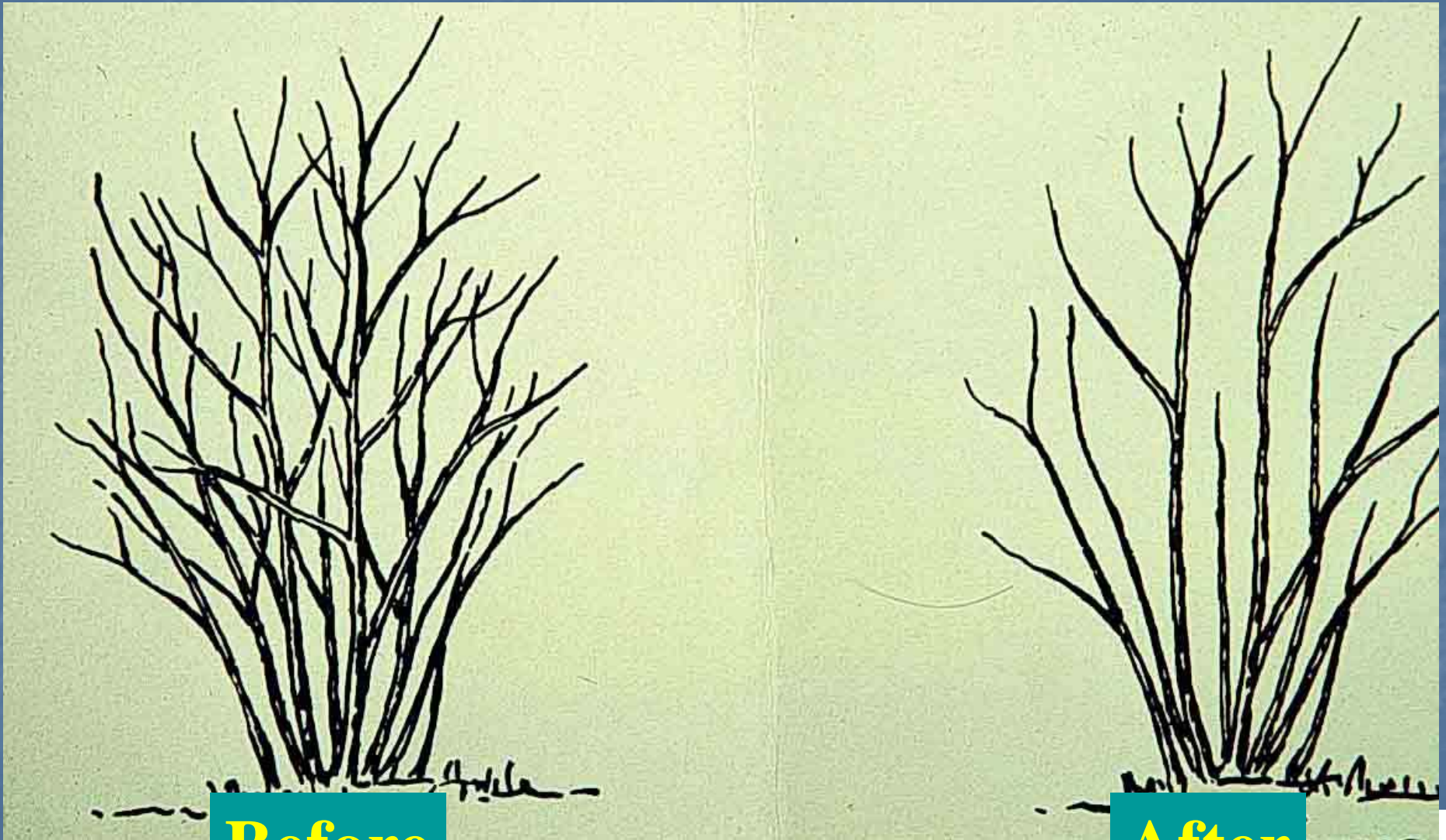




Do not leave stubs, and, generally don't remove more than 1/3 of 'canes' at any one time.



Renewal pruning



Before

After

J.Robbins 2002 -12



Shrubs that lend themselves to selective thinning.

Viburnums

Cleyera

Rose-of-Sharon/Althea

Ligustrum

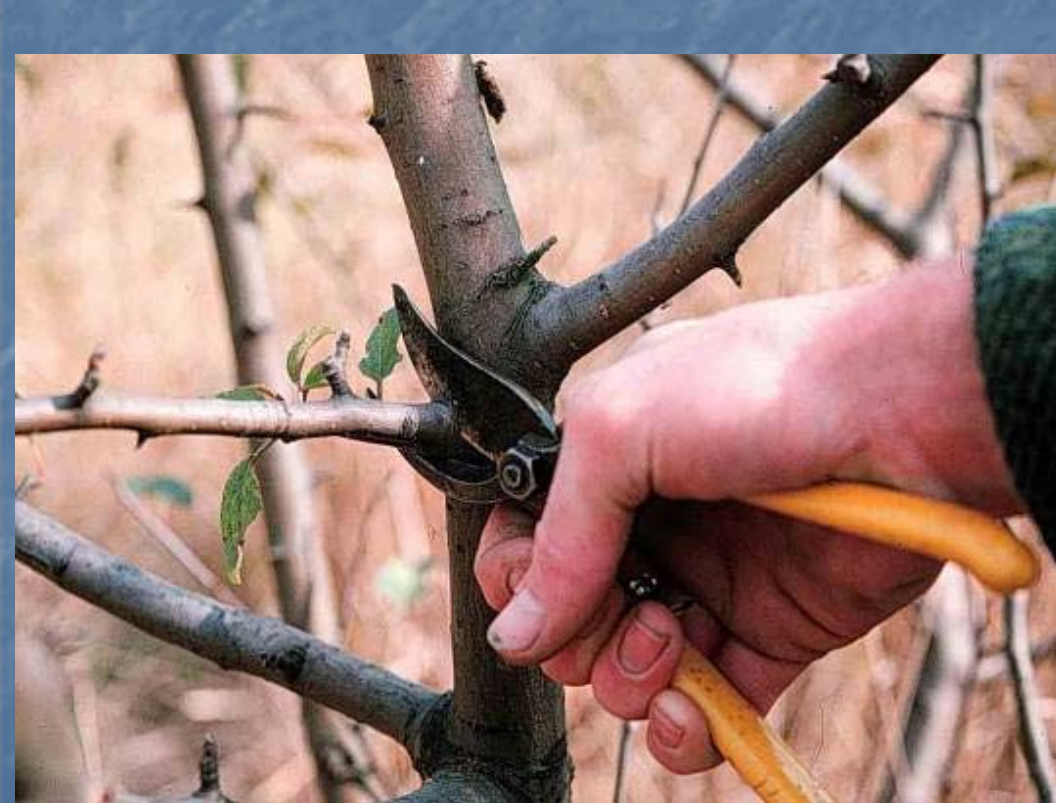
Azalea

Rhododendron

Hollies

Japanese Maples

Selective thinning involves cutting back to a lateral branch or to the bud. Selective thinning can reduce the plant size while maintaining a natural habit.





Shearing



More formal, and, once you start, difficult to break-out of habit.

Shearing typically requires different tools.



Formal Pruning









Grape-murder

For Crape myrtles:

- 1. Choose the right plant for the right spot**
Great variability on plant size.
Ground covers to trees.
- 2. Don't try to make a tree-type into a small shrub using radical pruning techniques.**
- 3. When you prune, use selective thinning, or, remove entire branches/canes to the ground rather than heading back every year to the same (ugly) stubs.**





When to prune flowering shrubs:

- Spring bloomers set flowers on older wood
 - *Normally set flower buds in late summer or early fall.
- Summer bloomers usually bloom on the current seasons growth.

Plants that flower on 'old' wood

(flower buds are formed in the late summer/fall, carried through the winter, and then flower in spring)



forsythia



Spring spiraea



Flowering quince



Big leaf hydrangea



Oakleaf hydrangea



azalea

Plants that flower on 'old' wood

Azalea

Forsythia

Redbud

Flowering quince

Honeysuckle, winter

Magnolia

Mockorange

Fringetree

Spiraea (Bridalwreath & Vanhoutte)

Lilac

Hydrangea (Bigleaf & Oakleaf)

Rhododendron

Viburnum

Weigela

Prune AFTER flowering !

Plants that flower on 'new' wood

(flower buds are formed on current season growth)



Summer spiraea



Crape myrtle



Buddleia

Plants that flower on 'new' wood

Abelia

Rose-of-Sharon

Butterfly bush

Clethra

Sumac

Crape myrtle

Roses

Spiraea (summer flowering types)

Vitex

Hydrangea (Panicle or Smooth)

Prune BEFORE new growth begins !

(usually done in late February)

Exceptions to the Rule:



Hydrangea problems



Special cases

Hybrid Tea Roses



**Cut back to 8-18" in early spring.
Prefer cutting back to an outward facing bud.**

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Special cases

Hybrid Tea Roses



Inward pointing bud



Outward pointing bud



Outward pointing bud

Climbing Roses



Special cases

Ornamental Grasses

Remember that the growing point for grasses is near the ground and that once we are past winter and have enjoyed the grass foliage and seedheads, we can/should cut grasses back. In the case of large grasses like pampass and fountain grass we may only be able to cut back to 12-18”.

Ornamental Grasses



Prune only if you know why.





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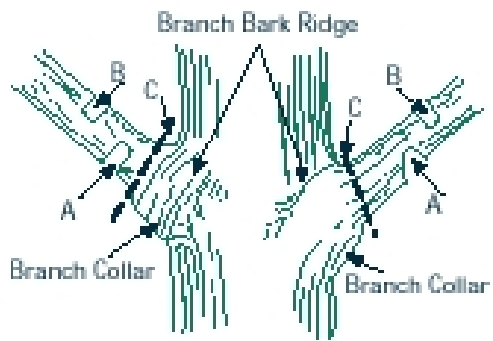
Correct problems while the plant is young.



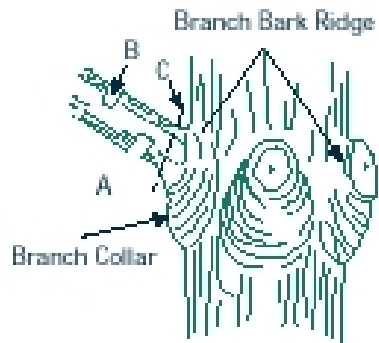
No pruning paint needed!
Make nice clean cuts.



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Hardwoods



Conifers

- A= First cut
- B= Second cut
- C= Third cut

visible collar









Summary

- Know when flowering plants bloom to determine timing of pruning.
- Are they cane producing plants or not.
- Evergreen plants grown just for foliage can be shaped at any time.
 - Severe pruning should be done in the spring for faster recovery.
- Know rules for special cases.