

Pruning Calendar

Prune Damaged, Diseased or Dead branches at any time of the year	
Plants	Remarks
DECEMBER - JANUARY	
Shade Trees: oak, hickory, beech, black gum, poplar, sycamore, ginkgo, etc. * (Bleeder trees include: birch, dogwood, elm, maple, & styrax)	Prune undesired and storm damaged limbs. For “bleeder” trees, heavy pruning should be done during the coldest weather. For light pruning of bleeder trees (See July). Make cuts using the Branch Collar Method of pruning. For more information see General Pruning Techniques
LATE JANUARY - FEBRUARY	
Roses	Heavy prune in mid-February around Valentine’s Day when dormancy has broken. Remove all dead, diseased and damaged canes. Remove all plant material smaller than the diameter of a pencil. Desired Results: 4-5 strong canes 18-30” in height with a vase-like open center.
Blueberries	On mature bushes prune by cutting out 3 to 4 of the largest, oldest canes. Crossing, diseased and low hanging branches should also be removed. Prune after the plants have shed their leaves but before flower buds begin to open. Expect to remove approximately one third of flower buds during pruning which will promote continued health in following years.
Grapes	Prune annually to improve fruit production and to make the vine training easier.
Summer Flowering Shrubs: crape myrtle, rose of sharon (althea), Butterfly Bush, Eleagnus, August flowering Hydrangeas (normally with white flowers)	Prune if shrub-like form is desired or if plants need shaping.
Ornamental Grasses: lirioppe, pampas grass, mondo grass, etc.	Trim annually. Important to trim off previous year’s growth before the spring growth begins.
Overgrown Broadleaf Shrubs: ligustrum (privet), boxwood, osmanthus, photinia (red tip), holly, cleyera, viburnum, etc.	Prune in late February to desired size. Rejuvenate by pruning out 1/3 of shrub each year. As a general rule try not to cut more than 1/3 of bush in any one year.
Camellia: japonica and sasanqua	Prune any time after flowering but not later than mid-July.
Conifers & Narrowleaf Evergreens: hemlock, juniper, arborvitae, leyland cypress, etc.	Often late summer growth from the previous season can misshape these plants. Trim away the excess growth to improve the shrub’s appearance. Do not trim away all of the green foliage – unlike broadleaf plants, buds will not develop from brown colored wood.

FEBRUARY – EARLY MARCH	
Rose	Prune annually for best flower production. Trim early in the month before new spring growth begins.
Nandina	Prune as needed. Cut the leggy and oldest canes near the ground. New shoots will develop at the location of your pruning cuts.
Abelia	Shape plants to desired form early in March.
Spring Flowering Shrubs: spirea, forsythia (yellow bells), flowering quince, loropetalum, breath-of-spring (winter honeysuckle), weigela, lilac, etc.	Prune IMMEDIATELY after flowering, but not after July 10th. In general, cut oldest limbs near the ground level for constant rejuvenation of shrubs.
LATE MARCH - APRIL	
Azalea	Light pruning (12 inches or less) after flowering but not after July 10th (Early spring – February – and autumn pruning removes next year’s blossoms). However, overgrown azaleas should be pruned in February**.
Winter Damaged Plants	Cut out any cold-damaged branches at the end of the month.
Berry Producing Shrubs: holly, pyracantha, etc.	Prune while in flower to prevent removal of all berries. Shape to desired form.
Spring Flowering Trees: flowering cherry, Bradford pear, serviceberry, etc.	Prune only as needed, immediately after blooming.
LATE APRIL - MAY	
Hedges: privet, abelia, holly, euonymus, boxwood, etc.	Prune as desired, always make top of hedge narrower than bottom.
MAY - JUNE	
Conifers & Narrowleaf Evergreens: hemlock, juniper, arborvitae, white pine, leyland cypress, etc.	Summer pruning of conifers is to shape the plants to their desired size. Start pruning in late June and continue through July. Trim only into green growth; brown wood on conifers will not regenerate new growth. White Pines should be trimmed in summer. With White Pines trim ONLY the growth that has grown since April (new growth).
Gardenia	Prune immediately after bloom, not after mid-August.
Perennials: phlox, shasta daisy, purple coneflower, rudbeckia, etc.	Remove old flowers to encourage re-bloom.
Hydrangea: Big Leaf or Florist	Prune while flowering or immediately after. (These hydrangeas usually have either pink or blue flowers.)

Fruit Trees	Remove water sprouts
JULY – AUGUST	
Roses	Prune by deadheading. Make cuts at a 45-degree angle, about 1/4 inch above an outward facing healthy bud. This will promote an open centered bush and encourage proper air circulation. Prune leggy plants only and fertilize after pruning for fall flowering.
“Bleeder” Trees: maple, birch, elm, styrax & dogwood	Perform light pruning as desired. (Light pruning involves branches of 18 inches in length or less.) Dogwoods look best left in their natural form. Prune only when grown out of their natural shape.
Hedges	As needed, keep bottom branches wider than top.
Brambles: blackberry & raspberry	Prune out the wood that bore fruit, cutting canes near ground level.
SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER	
Any Plants	DO NOT PRUNE shrubs or trees in late summer or early autumn. Pruning stimulates new growth which may not have time to harden off before frost. You may remove any deadwood from shrubs or trees.
NOVEMBER – DECEMBER	
Roses	Prune leggy canes to reduce damage from strong winter winds.
Weed Trees and Brush	Remove any underbrush now when it is easiest to see.
Berry Producing Plants: holly, nandina, pyracantha, etc.	Use berries indoors or in wreaths as Christmas decorations
Take a rest until January!!	

* SPECIAL NOTE: Some trees should be allowed to let their lowest limbs grow until they sweep the ground. Those trees that are commonly found in our region are: Southern Magnolia, Deodora Cedar, American Holly, Hemlock and White Pine.

** NOTE: Some pruning in late winter & early spring may result in removing this season’s flower buds. However, the results of the pruning are much better when trimmed before bud break.

Link to General Pruning Techniques: <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/pdf/general-pruning-techniques/2014-09-29/general-pruning-techniques.pdf>

NC State University provides equal opportunity and affirmative action efforts, and prohibits discrimination and harassment based upon a person’s age, color, disability, family and marital status, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, political beliefs, race, religion, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation and veteran status.