

Spring Pruning Guide

Suggested Perennial Plants to Prune in the Spring

Artemisia Most don't like being pruned in the fall. The growth that results is too tender to survive the winter and the resulting dieback is often enough to kill the whole plant. Prune in early spring. (USDA Zones 5 - 9)

Asters Fall blooming asters have likely been pinched throughout the growing season. They appreciate being left alone in the fall to recuperate. Cut back in the spring. (USDA Zones 4 - 8)

Astilbe does not require much maintenance. Fall clean-up may weaken the plant's tolerance for cold. Minimal spring clean-up is required. (USDA Zones 3 - 8)

Balloon Flower (*Platycodon grandiflorus*) If pruned for sturdiness, balloon flowers bloom later in the season and remain attractive until frost. Leave the old foliage as a marker and cut back in spring after new growth emerges. (USDA Zones 3 - 8)

Basket-of-Gold (*Aurinia saxatilis*) fares best and lives longer if sheared back after flowering and not allowed to go to seed. The foliage can be evergreen in mild winters and there doesn't seem to be any benefit to cutting it back until spring. (USDA Zones 3 - 7)

Bear's Breeches (*Acanthus spinosus*) Cut back old foliage, as needed, throughout the growing season. The new healthy growth may remain evergreen through winter. (USDA Zones 6 - 10)

Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia fulgida*) Although not particularly attractive in winter, the seed heads will feed the birds. Prune back in spring. (USDA Zones 3 - 9)

Blue Mist Shrub (*Caryopteris sp.*) Bloom on new growth. Cut back to 6 to 8 inches in the spring. Newer varieties can be very sensitive to cold and shouldn't be cut back until buds begin to green. (USDA Zones 5 - 9)

Butterfly Bush (*Buddleia davidii*) To lessen winter kill, wait for signs of green at the base then cut back to 6 to 10 inches. (USDA Zones 6 - 9)

Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) is a prolific self-seeder and should be deadheaded. Survive the winter better with protection from the foliage. (USDA Zones 4 - 9)

Campanula Most plants get sheared back at some point during the summer to clean up foliage and encourage a new flush of blooms. Fresh basal foliage that result should be left through winter, so as not to encourage more tender growth in the fall. (USDA Zones 3 - 8)

Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) likes moist soil during the growing season but not sitting in cold, wet soil all winter. The foliage and flower stems provide winter protection, so wait until spring to cut back to the ground. (USDA Zones 3 - 9)

Coral Bells (*Heuchera sp.*) are prone to heaving in soils that freeze and thaw; leaving the foliage intact helps to mulch the plants through winter. (USDA Zones 4 - 9)

Cushion Spurge (*Euphorbia polychroma*) In warmer climates, euphorbias can become a shrub and it's fine to wait until spring to clean out the dead foliage. In colder climates, cut the plant back to its base in the spring. (USDA Zones 4 - 8)

Delphinium Remove the flower stalks, but allow the foliage to remain until spring. (USDA ones 3 - 7)

Dianthus Most can remain somewhat evergreen throughout the winter. They will need some clean-up in the spring. (USDA Zones 5 - 8)

Foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*) enjoys the cool days of fall and may remain evergreen throughout the winter. Cut back ratty looking leaves in spring. (USDA Zones 3 - 8)

Foxglove, Perennial (*Digitalis purpurea*) are usually pruned back after flowering. Leave the new rosette of basal growth when conducting spring cleaning. (USDA Zones 3 - 8)

Bleeding Heart (*Dicentra formosa*, *D. eximia*) go dormant in mid- to late-summer so no clean up is needed. (USDA Zones 3 - 9)

Gas Plant (*Dictamnus albus*) has attractive seed heads lasting well into fall. Cut back in early spring when the sap that may irritate is not as pronounced. (USDA Zones 3 - 9)

Gay feather (*Liatris spicata*) is more sensitive to cool, wet soil than to cold temperatures. When left standing over winter, the seed heads provide food for the birds and may provide some self-seeding. (USDA Zones 3 - 9)

Geum can remain semi-evergreen throughout winter so no fall pruning is necessary, especially if you've been deadheading and cleaning up dead leaves during the growing season. (USDA Zones 5 - 7)

Globe Thistle (*Echinops ritro*) will respond well to a pruning in July, producing more flowers and sturdier plants that will stand for the winter and feed the birds. The plant's winter survival seems improved if not cut back hard in the fall. (USDA Zones 3 - 8)

Goldenrod (*Solidago*) The new hybrids don't seed or spread and can be left standing for winter interest. Study clumpers, like 'Fireworks' and 'Golden Fleece', will remain upright through spring. The old-fashioned species goldenrod should be cut in fall. (USDA 2 - 8)

Bergenia (*Bergenia cordifolia*) The shiny round leaves can remain evergreen in mild winters and even cold damaged leaves turn an attractive bronze color. Clean up in spring, only as needed. (USDA Zones 3 - 8)

Italian Bugloss (*Anchusa azurea*) looks better and self-seeds less if sheared back after flowering. Plants can be sheared all the way back to the crown, since foliage declines rapidly after flowering. Leave the new growth to help the plant recover and cut again in spring. (USDA Zones 3 - 8)

Joe-Pye Weed (*Eupatorium maculatum*) blooms well into the fall and then produce fluffy seed heads. Cut back in the fall or leave them for the birds until spring cleaning. (USDA Zones 2 - 9)

Lady's Mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*) doesn't like to be sheared back frequently. Occasional shearing or selective deleafing may be necessary because of sun scorch, but plants will over winter better if left intact until spring cleaning. (USDA Zones 4 - 7)

Lamb's Ear (*Stachys byzantina*) Remove winter damage when the leaves perk up in the spring. (USDA 4 - 8)

Lavender (*Lavandula sp.*) Many gardeners have a hard time over-wintering lavender. The problem is more often wetness than cold, but cold is a factor. Don't prune lavender late in the season as new growth is extremely cold sensitive. Wait until new growth appears in the spring before removing winter die back. (USDA Zones 5 - 9)

Lavender Cotton (*Santolina chamaecyparissus*) needs time to harden before winter. Don't prune at all after mid-August. Wait until new growth appears in the spring before pruning. (USDA Zones 6 - 8)

Lupine (*Lupinus sp.*) can be temperamental, short-lived. Leave the foliage on for winter protection and hope for the best come spring. (USDA Zones 4 - 6)

Mums (*Chrysanthemum*) Leave the foliage intact to protect the plant's crown. (USDA Zones 5 - 9)

Pincushion Flower (*Scabiosa columbaria*) You can remove the old flower stems, but leaving the old foliage may be the only way you will know where the plant was, come spring. (USDA Zones 5 - 7)

Purple Coneflowers (*Echinacea purpurea*) don't look terribly attractive in winter, but their seeds do attract and feed birds. Shorten stems in July to get sturdier plants then cut back in the spring. (USDA Zones 3 - 8)

Queen-of-the-Prairie, Queen-of-the-Meadow (*Filipendula rubra*, *F. ulmaria*) These tall plants almost always flop over and can be cut back after blooming. (USDA Zones 3 - 9)

Red-Hot Poker (*Kniphofia*) Give the plant a good spring-clean, removing any dead and decaying leaves. The spent flower spikes should also be cut during spring, making sure they are taken out at the base - the dry and jagged remains of old flower spikes can cause a nasty cut and harbor pests such as earwigs. (USDA Zones 5 - 9)

Russian Sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*) doesn't like to be trimmed back in the fall because its tender growth is too sensitive to cold. Wait until new growth appears in the spring and then cut back to about 6 to 8 inches. If the only new growth is from the base of the plant, prune to the ground. (USDA Zones 5 - 9)

Sea Lavender (*Limonium latifolium*) Let them be for the winter and clean-up any die back in the spring. (USDA Zones 3 - 9)

Sea Holly (*Eryngium*) A good deadheading in late summer will encourage a flush of basal growth to carry the plants through winter. No further pruning is needed. (Zones 3 - 8)

Sedum Many of the tall sedums can remain attractive throughout the winter, even holding caps of snow on their flowerheads. 'Autumn Joy', in particular, holds up very well. The basal foliage appears very early in spring, so sedum can be one of the first plants you cut back in the spring. (USDA Zones 3 - 10)

Tickseed (*Coreopsis* species) Most seem to fare better if allowed to stand during the winter and cleaned-up in the spring. (USDA Zones 4 - 9)

Turtlehead (*Chelone lyonii*) Keeping the foliage on until spring seems to improve winter survival. (USDA Zones 3 - 8)

Valerian (*Centranthus ruber*) Cutting it back to about 6 to 8 inches in late summer and leave the new growth for winter protection. (USDA Zones 5 - 8)

Wand Flower (*Guara sp.*) is such a short-lived perennial that allowing the flowers to remain and possibly self-seed may be the only way you'll see another plant pop up in the garden next spring. (USDA Zones 6 - 9)

Willow Amsonia (*Amsonia tabernaemontana*) holds its shape better if sheared by about one-third after flowering. You'll lose the seed pods, but you'll prevent rampant self-seeding. After this initial shearing, plants respond better to being cut back in the spring which seems to rejuvenate them. (USDA Zones 3 - 9)

Trees and Shrubs to Prune in Late Spring/Summer, After Bloom

- Azalea (*Rhododendron* species)
- Beautybush (*Kolkwitzia amabilis*)
- Bridal Wreath Spirea (*Spirea x vanhouttei*)
- Flowering Crabapple (*Malus species and cultivars*)
- Forsythia (*Forsythia x intermedia*)
- Hawthorn (*Crataegus* species and cultivars)

- Hydrangea, Bigleaf (*Hydrangea macrophylla*)
- Lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*)
- Magnolia (*Magnolia* species and cultivars)
- Mockorange (*Philadelphus coronarius*)
- Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*)
- Rhododendron (*Rhododendron* species)
- Serviceberry (*Amelanchier x grandiflora*)
- Slender Deutzia (*Deutzia gracilis*)
- Weigela (*Weigela florida*)

Trees and Shrubs to Prune in Early Spring, While Dormant

You can still get your pruner out this spring to shape the following list of trees and shrubs, while they are still dormant.

- Bradford Pear (*Pyrus calleryana*)
- Butterfly Bush (*Buddleia davidii*)
- Crape Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*)
- Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*)
- Flowering Plum (*Prunus blireana*)
- Glossy Abelia (*Abelia x grandiflora*)
- Golden Rain Tree (*Koelreuteria paniculata*)
- Honeysuckle (*Lonicera fragrantissima*)
- Hydrangea, Peegee (*Hydrangea paniculata* ‘Grandiflora’)
- Potentilla (*Potentilla fruticosa*)
- Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)
- Spirea (except Bridal Wreath) (*Spirea japonica*)
- Wisteria (*Wisteria* species)

Resources

Oregon State University publications are available at your county’s OSU Extension Service office or online at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog>

The American Horticultural Society Pruning & Training by Christopher Brickell & David Joyce

Cass Turnbull’s Guide to Pruning by Cass Turnbull

Pruning: A Practical Guide by Peter McHoy

The Pruner’s Bible: A Step-By-Step Guide to Pruning Every Plant in Your Garden by Steve Bradley

Pruning information at <http://www.plantamnesty.org>

Home Orchard Society www.homeorchardsociety.org

USDA Tree Guide <http://www.na.fs.fed.us/SPFO/pubs/uf/treeguidehtm/chapter4.htm>

<http://Gardening.about.com> written by Marie Iannotti, former Cornell Cooperative Extension Horticulture Educator and Master Gardener program coordinator.

Pruning Trees and Shrubs, 10-Minute University™ handout, www.cmastergardeners.org

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