

## Prune summer blooming shrubs

After a long winter there is an amazing amount of pruning to do. When to prune shrubs is determined by when they bloom. Shrubs that bloom in summer, anytime from June on, such as roses and hydrangeas should be pruned in early March. Spring blooming shrubs such as rhodies and camellias should be pruned after flowering is over, but as soon as possible after the flowers fade.

Examples of shrubs that can be pruned in early spring include roses, hydrangeas, summer blooming clematis, Buddleja (butterfly bush), hardy fuchsia, spirea, red twig dogwood, forsythia, and a host of others. Food reserves from the roots will soon send out new shoots which then tend to flower at the ends of the new growth during summer. Each of these shrubs can be pruned differently, but the key is to cut them back near the ground to just two or three buds above healthy thick stems to provide a compact shrub with a good framework for the new growth.

Different kinds of roses require different pruning methods. Tea, floribunda, and grandiflora roses should be pruned to about 6 inches from the ground to outward facing buds to promote strong outward growth. Prune most types of climbing roses to maintain a framework of strong canes. Every year remove any canes that are becoming old and less productive. Prune the sprout growth coming off the main canes back to a couple of inches tall. These sprouts will produce this summer's flowers.

Different kinds of hydrangea also require different kinds of pruning. *Hydrangea macrophylla* (mop head and lace cap flowers) are best thinned by symmetrically removing 1/3 of the oldest canes every spring when the buds swell in early March. Cut back to healthy buds just below the end of the branches. *Hydrangea arborescens*, such as the 'Incrediball' series can be cut back by 2/3rds or more each spring. They'll grow back and produce flowers for much of summer.

Forsythia should be thinned by cutting about a third of the oldest canes right to the ground. Resist the urge to shear the top growth as it will cause about a gazillion sprouts to grow up from the top.

Butterfly Bushes, spirea and barberries can be cut down by 2/3rds. To keep them small with colorful bark, red twig dogwoods can be cut down to about 4 inches from the ground. Basically any shrub that suffered foliage burn during winter, such as Mexican mock orange, can be cut back by at least 2/3rds to encourage new attractive growth to take the place of the burned foliage.

Hardy fuchsias and salvias can be cut back to about 4 inches from the ground to keep them compact and floriferous. Wait to cut these back until new growth appears at the base of the plant.

Finally, removing the old fronds from ferns and the leaves from *Epimedium* (bishop's cap) by cutting them back to the crown will rejuvenate the plants and make them look much more attractive. Do this as early as possible in spring. You don't want to cut off new emerging growth, and it's much easier to do if you do the pruning before new fiddle heads or flowers begin to emerge.