

We're Here to Help!

Regular pruning is one of the best ways to maintain and rejuvenate woody plants in your yard.

However, for those new to gardening, this may seem like a daunting task.

If this is you, feel free to stop by and ask us your questions. We can help you navigate this task. Phelan Gardens is open seven days a week.



Open Year-Round
7 days a week

4955 Austin Bluffs Parkway
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Pruning Tips



Phelan Gardens

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The Cutting Edge

As you survey your yard this spring, one of the first tasks that may come to mind is cutting back, thinning out, or shaping the various plants you have. But before undertaking this project, consider the following pruning guidelines:

General Tips:

- Shrubs do not need to be pruned every year (*it can be done for reasons mentioned later, however it is not a mandatory annual task on many shrubs, especially new ones*). Pruning is most beneficial to older shrubs.
- Pruning can help a flowering shrub produce more flowers, control pests, size, and shape.
- If plants are left unpruned indefinitely they can become woody and flowers will become fewer.
- The safest bet in pruning, is that almost all shrubs can be pruned in the winter, when they are dormant. This is an easy way to help maintain shape. However, for most shrubs, you will not be able to tell where the new buds will occur at this time of year.
- If a major prune is required, it should be done in late winter or early spring since a late summer pruning can leave new growth susceptible to damage from early freezes. (*see specific notes for spring-flowering shrubs*)

- Minor pruning can be done any time of the year. This includes dead-heading which removes unattractive spent buds, and may encourage new flower growth.

Spring-flowering shrubs

Should be pruned right after blooming has ended. Cutting these back in late summer or fall takes off many of the buds that will form next year's flowers. A good rule to follow is to not prune after the 4th of July. Examples include:

- **Lilacs**
- **Forsythia**
- **Brooms**
- **Quince**
- **Sand cherry**
- **Dogwood**
- **Wiegela**
- **Hedge Cotoneaster**

Summer-blooming shrubs

Should be pruned in early spring before the new growth begins. Summer blooming shrubs produce buds in the current growing season. So, the goal with them is to remove old unwanted growth before the new season begins. Examples include:

- **Blue Mist Spirea**
- **Butterfly Bush**
- **Snowball Bush (viburnum)**
- **Mockorange**
- **Potentilla**

Roses need mulch pulled away when night temperatures routinely stay above 25 degrees. Cut any blackened winter-killed canes back to healthy tissue. As weather warms and ground thaws, cut back healthy canes by one-third.

Frost-damaged plants should be inspected on the upper stems for the first sign of new growth. If you see new growth, prune out dead wood, cutting well into live tissues. Make the cut just above a node where new growth emerges.

Corrective pruning (*such as removing crossing or unwanted branches*) may be done for trees and shrubs, including evergreens, at any time of the year. Winter is a good time to do this as you can clearly see the structure of the branches. Also, there are few if any insects to attack your shrubs in the winter.