

Pruning Mature Deciduous Shrubs

Correct pruning is one of the most essential of all management practices for shrubs in the home landscape. Proper pruning will help keep shrubs vigorous, maintain them in proper shape and form for a desirable landscape effect, and add years to their usefulness. Prune deciduous shrubs to maintain natural habit of growth; remove dead, diseased or broken branches; promote flower and fruit development; encourage vigorous growth of plants with colored twigs; and improve chances of survival at transplanting time.

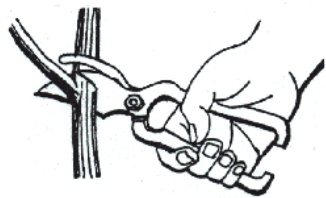
With most shrubs, the ideal time to prune is during the dormant season before new growth begins. Spring flowering shrubs, such as forsythia and lilac, should be pruned shortly after flowering to avoid removing flower buds. Prune shrubs that bloom after the end of June in the winter or spring before new growth starts. These plants develop their flower buds during the spring growth period. Shrubs that bloom on current season's growth include rose-of-Sharon. In general, most deciduous shrubs should be thinned out rather than sheared or cut back. Thinning out prevents excessive or unsightly branch formation at the top of the plant and maintains the natural habit of growth. Thinning is done by cutting off a branch where it is attached to the main stem. This method, the least conspicuous of all type of pruning, is best used on plants that are too dense. To develop branches that grow toward the outside of the plant, remove the inward growing branches and prune to an outward facing bud or branch. Prune branches at the point of attachment to another

branch or back to a bud. Pruning just above a bud prevents dieback of the stem, and a new branch will develop from the bud. Shearing causes dense growth to develop at the ends of the branches. Such growth shades the rest of the plant, which gradually loses its lower foliage and becomes sparse and spindly looking.

You can maintain plants at a given height and width for years by thinning out. This method of pruning is best done with hand pruning shears, not hedge shears. Thin out the oldest and tallest stems first.

Older shrubs that have become too large or contain considerable unproductive wood should be rejuvenated. Prune the plant by cutting off the oldest branches at the ground, leaving only the young stems. If there are not many younger stems, remove the older wood over a three-year period to maintain the overall shape of the plant. New shoots that develop can be cut back to various lengths by the thinning-out method, which encourages the development of strong branches. Plants that often become overgrown and benefit from rejuvenation include forsythia, honeysuckle, spirea, viburnum, weigela and other fast growing types.

These plants, if extensively overgrown, severely weakened or otherwise unhealthy, can be cut back to the ground but may not bloom for one or several years, depending on the rate of regrowth. (MJM)



Who to contact to be yard smart.

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| Backyard Composting | Cooperative Extension | 441-7180 |
| Compost Availability | Recycling Office | 441-8215 |
| Disposal Lawn Chemicals | Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department | 441-8040 |
| Lawn Chemical Use | Cooperative Extension | 441-7180 |
| Mulching Grass Clippings | Cooperative Extension | 441-7180 |
| Water Conservation | The Water Center | 472-3305 |
| Wood Chip Availability | Recycling Office | 441-8215 |
| Yard Waste Collection | Lincoln Solid Waste Management Association | 441-8284 |
| Complaints on Backyard | Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department | 441-8040 |
| NebGuide Lists/Publications/Websites | Cooperative Extension | 441-7180 |
| Nebraska Department of Agriculture | | |
| Information on certification for private and commercial pesticide applicators | (8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., M-F)..... | 471-2394 |
| Poison Control Center (24 hours)..... | | (800) 955-9119 |
| National Pesticide Telecommunications Network | (8:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m., M-F)..... | (800) 858-7378 |

Answers

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adequately turned compost heap will generate little if any objectionable odor. Good aeration, provided by regularly turning over the materials in the pile, is essential for good, rapid decomposition. Also, keeping the compost damp but not waterlogged will go a long way toward preventing unpleasant odors.

How long does it take to reach a finished product?

Generally, a compost pile that contains a good mixture of

finely chopped materials, is turned regularly and kept moist, will be ready in two to four months. A pile or bin left unattended and material not shredded may take a year or longer to decompose. Piles prepared in the late fall will not be very well decomposed by the spring. When the compost is finished, the pile will be about half its original size and have a pleasant, earthy smell.

Of what value or use is the finished compost product?

Compost is used as an organic amendment to improve the physical, chemical, and biological properties of the soils. For example, adding compost to garden soil will increase the moisture holding ability of sandy soils, and improve the drainage and aeration of heavy clay soils. Over time, yearly additions of compost will create desirable soil structure making the soil easier to work. (MJM)

Trouble-shooting Your Compost Pile

Composting is a science based on guess work. Ideally a compost pile's outside will be warm, moist and earthy-smelling. When its not, it means that one or more of the six components listed at the beginning of this article are out of balance. The chart will help you correct the problem. If there is a problem with your compost pile, don't worry; compost will still result, but you'll have to wait longer.

There are many books about composting; look for them at book stores, garden centers and the public library. Your county extension agent can also answer your composting questions.

| Symptoms | Problems | Solutions |
|--|---|--|
| The pile is wet and smells like rotten eggs. | Not enough air; pile too wet. | Turn it; add coarse, dry wastes such as straw or corn stalks. |
| The center is dry and contains tough, woody wastes. | Not enough water in pile. Too much woody material. | Turn and moisten; add fresh green waste; chop or shred the pile. |
| The pile is damp and warm right in the middle, but nowhere else. | Pile is too small, or too dry. | Collect more material and mix into a new pile; moisten. |
| The pile is damp and sweet-smelling, but will not heat up. | Lack of nitrogen. The compost may be done, check and see! | Mix in fresh grass clippings or nitrogen fertilizer. |
| The pile has an amonia odor. | Too much green material. Lack of nitrogen. | Add high carbon material, such as straw, wood chips or sawdust. |
| Pets, racoons, rats and insects are attracted to the pile. | Meat scraps and fatty foods are present. | Remove meat and fatty foods from pile. Cover pile with a layer of soil. Turn the pile to increase temperature. |

