



Pruning Guide

GROUPED BY PRUNING TIME

Easier for Gardeners. Smarter Than Most Landscapers.

Pruning can make or break your plants — literally. The trick isn't cutting more; it's cutting smarter. This guide groups plants by the best time to prune them so you (or your landscaper with a pickup truck) know when to act and when to step back. When in doubt, less is more.

ANYTIME

Flexible or Minimal Pruning

- **Aronia** (*Chokeberry*)
Best left untouched. It's perfectly happy doing its thing.
- **Ligustrum** (*Privet*)
Prune anytime. It can handle almost anything you throw at it.
- **Nandina** (*Heavenly Bamboo*)
No pruning necessary. It's already perfect.
- **Boxwood** (*Buxus*)
Light shaping February–May, otherwise let it be smugly perfect.
- **Magnolia**
No pruning needed. Step back and admire.
- **Myrica** (*Northern Bayberry*)
Trim rogue stems only.
- **Physocarpus** (*Ninebark*)
Leave alone unless it misbehaves.
- **Cotoneaster**
Little to no pruning needed.
- **Potentilla** (*Cinquefoil*)
Prune lightly anytime late winter or early spring; it won't complain.
- **Privet** (*Ligustrum*)
Hardy and forgiving. Just don't sculpt it into a cube.

LATE WINTER / EARLY SPRING

Pruning Time: February – April

- **Abelia** (*Glossy Abelia*)
Prune January–May, but late winter is ideal.
- **Buddleia** (*Butterfly Bush*)
Hard prune for strong new growth and more blooms.
- **Callicarpa** (*Beautyberry*)
Cut back to 18–24 inches to renew growth.
- **Caryopteris** (*False Spirea*)
Cut to about 12 inches in late winter.
- **Clethra** (*Summersweet*)
Optional light trim in late winter.
- **Cryptomeria** (*Japanese Cedar*)
Shape gently February–May.
- **Cedrus** (*Cedar*)
Prune late winter. Never touch the main leader!
- **Leyland Cypress**
February–June light shaping only.
- **Juniper** (*Juniperus*)
Trim February–March, lightly.
- **Hypericum** (*St. John's Wort*)
Hard prune in late winter; it loves a fresh start.
- **Potentilla** (*Cinquefoil*)
Late winter pruning keeps it compact and happy.
- **Vitex** (*Chaste Shrub*)
Cut to 12 inches November–April.



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LATE WINTER / EARLY SPRING

Continued...

- **Spirea** (*Summer Blooming*)
Trim late winter or early spring to shape and refresh.
- **Hibiscus syriacus** (*Rose of Sharon*)
Prune January–April for sturdy growth.
- **Hydrangea arborescens**
Late winter cut encourages fresh blooms.
- **Dogwood** (*Cornus alba*)
Prune late winter to show off those red twigs.
- **Arborvitae** (*Thuja*)
Shape in late winter if needed.
- **Inkberry, Blue Holly, Japanese Holly**
Prune late winter to maintain shape.

Pro-Tip: Think of it as a pre-spring haircut — just a tidy trim, not a buzzcut!

RIGHT AFTER FLOWERING

Pruning Time: Spring or Early Summer

- **Azalea**
Prune within 30 days after flowering. Stop after June or you'll cut off next year's blooms.
- **Forsythia**
Prune within 30 days after flowering to avoid losing next spring's show.
- **Rhododendron**
Shape lightly after blooms fade. No fertilizer past June.
- **Deutzia**
Prune within 30 days after flowering.

- **Weigela**
Prune lightly after first bloom to encourage a second round.
- **Lilac** (*Syringa*)
Prune within 30 days after flowering. Patience = more flowers.
- **Pieris** (*Japanese Andromeda*)
Prune within 30 days after flowering.
- **Itea** (*Virginia Sweetspire*)
Prune within 30 days after flowering.
- **Kerria** (*Japanese Greenstem*)
Prune after its spring bloom.
- **Camellia**
Prune within 30 days after flowering, both fall and spring types.
- **Viburnum**
Prune within 30 days after flowering.
- **Crapemyrtle** (*Lagerstroemia*)
Only remove dead wood after leaves appear. No "Crape Murder."
- **Fothergilla**
Skip pruning. It's naturally good-looking.
- **Spirea** (*Spring Blooming / Bridal Wreath*)
Prune after flowering. Always.

Pro-Tip: If you prune before it blooms, you're basically cutting off next year's fireworks show.



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MID-SUMMER TOUCH-UPS

Pruning Time: June – July

- Leucothoe
Prune June–July for best growth.
- Spirea (*Summer Blooming*)
Trim lightly to encourage re-bloom.
- Boxwood
Light shaping only. No hedge trauma.
- Privet
Light reshaping only if it's misbehaving.

Pro-Tip: Mid-summer is the plant world's salon season — just light trims and styling, please.

FALL / EARLY WINTER

Pruning Time: October – December

- Buddleia (*Butterfly Bush*)
Fall pruning keeps it blooming longer.
- Shrub Willow (*Salix*)
November–March trimming works great.
- Siberian Carpet Cypress (*Microbiota*)
Trim November–April if needed.
- Chaste Shrub (*Vitex*)
Anytime November–April.

Pro-Tip: Perfect time for a light haircut before their long winter nap.

BEST LEFT ALONE

Seriously, Don't Touch These

- Aronia, Fothergilla, Magnolia, Nandina, Winterberry Holly, Ninebark
All happy untouched.
- Azalea (after June), Hydrangea macrophylla and serrata (after mid-summer), Oakleaf Hydrangea
Cutting late means no blooms next year.
- Bayberry
Self-sufficient and low-maintenance. Hands off.

Pro-Tip: If your landscaper insists on pruning these, hand them this guide — and maybe the bill for replacements.

THE MOLZON WAY

The best pruning tool is patience (and maybe a coffee mug). If you're ever unsure, wait. Most plants prefer a gentle hand and good timing over a power trimmer. Nature's been pruning for a while; she knows what she's doing.



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