

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

**DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln**

---

Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-  
Lincoln Extension

Extension

---

1933

## EC1214 Pruning Ornamental Shrubs, Vines, and Trees

E. H. Hoppert

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/extensionhist>

---

Hoppert, E. H., "EC1214 Pruning Ornamental Shrubs, Vines, and Trees" (1933). *Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension*. 2432.

<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/extensionhist/2432>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Extension at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

E.C. #1214

1933

RECEIVED  
APR 1 1937  
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

Nebraska  
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK  
IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS  
U. of N. Agr. College & U. S. Dept. of Agr. Cooperating  
W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln

Extension  
Circular  
1214

PRUNING ORNAMENTAL SHRUBS, VINES, AND TREES  
E. H. Hoppert

Ornamental shrubs and vines require systematic pruning to keep them at their best in appearance, symmetry and vigor. During the first 3 or 4 years after the shrubs have been set out, very little pruning will need to be done but thereafter most shrubs will need attention annually.

There are a number of definite reasons for pruning shrubs, some of the common ones being as follows:

1. To remove old weak wood. The plant replaces this with new vigorous wood which blooms more profusely.
  2. To remove dead or badly diseased branches or branches that are seriously infested with insects. Lilacs sometimes become infested with Oyster Shell Scale and Japanese quince with San Jose Scale. Such plants should be sprayed with a dormant oil spray or a dormant lime sulfur spray in early spring and then the weakest branches cut out.
  3. To thin out crowding branches. Those that remain will receive more light and food. As a result they will produce better foliage and blooms.
  4. To keep the ornamental twig sorts attractive. The young wood of red twigged dogwood and of the yellow twigged dogwood is more striking in its winter effect than is the older wood.
  5. To control undesirable habits of growth. The golden bell produces long slender shoots that may extend out over the lawn. Sometimes shrubs become larger than desired. Heavy annual pruning and summer pinching may be resorted to in such cases to dwarf the shrubs but it is more satisfactory to remove the offending shrubs and substitute a smaller sort.
- Some sorts grow to a large size quickly while others, though large when mature, attain their ultimate height rather slowly. If both kinds are used in a border or in a foundation planting, it may be desirable to suppress the rapid growing sort annually by heading back its branches until the slower growing sort has nearly reached its ultimate height.
6. To make the shrubs formal in outline for the formal garden.
  7. To make them tree-like by pruning them to a single stem. Japanese snowball, hydrangea P.G., shrub althea, lilacs and privets may be treated in this way.
  8. To lengthen the blooming period of shrubs. Weigela, Spirea Anthony Waterer, hybrid Rugosa roses and other so-called everblooming shrubs, will bloom longer if the flower stems are cut off after the blooms have passed.



## WHEN TO PRUNE

I. Flowering shrubs which bloom early and produce their flowers upon wood of last year are pruned immediately after they are thru blooming. From  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the old wood may be removed each year.

The following shrubs belong in this class:

Flowering almond	Siberian pea
Fringe tree	Flowering quince
Deutzia	Golden bell
Flowering currant	Snowball
Climbing roses	Spirea Van Houttii
Spirea arguta	Pussy willow
Spirea thunbergii	

Lilacs also belong in this class, but here the annual pruning is confined primarily to the removal of the old flowers. Heavy pruning such as recommended before, would interfere seriously with the flowering habits of this popular shrub. Most lilacs sprout badly. Sprouts should be removed each year. In occasional years 2 or 3 sprouts may be left to replace some of the old wood, providing, of course, that they are on their own roots. If they happen to be budded on some other stock the renewal shoots should arise from above the original bud and not from root sprouts or from sprouts below the original bud.

II. The following shrubs are pruned in the dormant season, preferably in the spring just before growth begins:

#Ashleaved spirea (Sorbaria)	#Hydrangea
#Buddlea	#Hybrid tea roses
*Barberry	*Mock orange
*Bush honeysuckle	*Spireas (late blooming sorts)
*Bush roses	*Snow berry
*Coral berry	#Tamarix
#Dogwood	

#Most of these sorts bloom late in the season on new wood. They are pruned very heavily, leaving only a few buds on the base of the strong shoots that grew last year. Dogwood and Tamarix are the exception. Here about half of the shoots are cut in this way and the other half cut back the next year.

\*These sorts are pruned lightly, about  $\frac{1}{5}$  of the old wood being removed annually.

III. There is another group of shrubs which requires very little pruning. The sorts mentioned below are pruned a little after blooming and a little in the dormant season just before growth begins.

Ootoneaster	Elder
Viburnum - nearly all species	
Sumac	Wahoo



Rejuvenating Neglected Shrubs. When shrubs are neglected for several years they present a much more complex problem than those that have received regular attention. Perhaps the simplest way of handling them is to cut off all of the top at the crown, but they will be unattractive for a year or two. A better way is to cut out a third to a half of the oldest stems at the ground. In 2 or 3 years all of the old wood will have been replaced with young vigorous wood.

Pruning at Planting Time. All shrubs require some pruning at planting time if they are to survive the planting operation. Those that are moved carefully from one place in the yard to another require very little pruning, particularly if they are young and care has been used in digging them. If the shrubs are old, a smaller proportion of the root system is generally taken and the top is pruned correspondingly heavier. In the former case it will usually suffice to remove 1 or 2 stems at the crown. In the latter case it is safer to remove a third of the stems. Some folks simply shear off the outer third of all the stems. This method is satisfactory so far as helping the shrub to become established is concerned, but it destroys its natural appearance for the first year or two.

Shrubs that have been in storage cellars thru the winter generally need a much heavier pruning than those that are freshly dug.

Pruning Ornamental Vines. After ornamental vines have become well established they will require heavy annual pruning to keep them looking their best. If they are allowed to go unpruned, desirable growth is produced only at the outer ends of last years shoots, leaving the lower parts of the vine ragged in appearance. There are 2 general methods of treating the vines. One is to cut off at the trunk a fourth of the old canes each year. In this case the entire top is renewed thru a period of 4 years. The other method is to cut off all the new shoots annually to 3 or 4 buds, (the so-called spur system of pruning). Occasionally a long new cane is left as a renewal and the old arm removed back to the trunk. This system requires much more work than the former method but it produces better bloom and more uniformly vigorous shoots. Vines like the honeysuckle and the Japanese clematis may occasionally be cut clear to the ground. Others, like Engleman's ivy, may grow over the cornice and onto the roof unless cut back severely each year. The most practical time to do this pruning is in the spring before growth begins.

Pruning Ornamental Trees. The tops of newly transplanted trees should be reduced about a third at planting time. The larger the tree the more necessary is the pruning. Elms, soft maples, poplars, and other varieties that are easy to transplant, should have 1/3 of the side branches taken off close to the trunk. However, in the case of oaks, hard maples, and birches, all the side branches are cut back 1/3 to 1/2 but none are removed entirely the first year. Any sprouts that form on the trunk during the first or second year should be allowed to remain until the trees are definitely established. These sprouts help to shade the trunk, thereby preventing sunscald. In later years they should be removed.

Most shade trees require some training in the early years of their life to make them symmetrical and to provide the proper number of well spaced scaffold branches. Some species like the oaks, birches, hard maples, and the sycamore develop this ideal type of "head" without much help, but such sorts as Chinese elm, American elm, soft maple, or honey locust will suffer less from breakage and grow into better trees

11775m



if trained properly. The strongest type of tree is one that has a central leader from which arise 6 or 8 well spaced side branches, no two of which are directly opposite each other on the trunk. Permanent branches on the same side of the trunk should not be closer than 3 feet. It is much better to remove objectionable branches when it can be done with hand shears than to wait until a saw is needed.

Old established trees should be pruned carefully and intelligently. The practice of "dehorning" all the main branches of shade trees every 3 or 4 years is common in some parts of the state. Any one who values shade trees should never tolerate this type of tree butchery. It ruins the natural form and grace of the trees and shortens their life.

Dead limbs or badly broken limbs should, of course, be removed. Crossing and crowding branches should be thinned out. An unhealed wound is a source of danger in that it permits the entry of rot organisms. In making the cuts the person doing the work can help nature by making the wounds in such a manner that healing will be facilitated. Stubs should never be left. The cuts should be made close to and parallel to the trunk or main limbs. The wounds should be covered annually with a good tree paint until they have healed over.

Evergreens as a class require very little pruning. Firs, spruces, and pines sometimes develop irregularly and in some cases less densely than is desired. In such cases the terminal buds are pinched out in the spring. This forces the lateral buds into stronger growth, and helps to thicken the growth. If certain branches grow faster than others they are pinched back in the same way.

The lower branches of these species should never be removed if it can be avoided. Without them the trees look unnatural. Evergreens do not send out sprouts as do the broadleaf trees and, therefore, there is no way of replacing these branches once they have been removed.

Sometimes the leader is accidentally broken out of a pine or a spruce tree. A new leader may be trained up by selecting a strong side branch from the upper whorl of branches and tying this securely to a stiff stake. Cedars and arbor vitae are frequently sheared to a definite shape. This type of pruning should be done early in the growing season and again in midsummer, provided sufficient growth is made to warrant it. The long bladed hedge shears are best adapted for this purpose.