



## Pruning & Maintenance Instructions for Select Plants

1. Forsythia, Yellowtwig Dogwood, and Redtwig Dogwood (*Cornus alba* and *Cornus sericea* cultivars): prune Forsythia immediately after flowering, prune the Yellowtwig and Redtwig Dogwoods in winter so the least colorful branches are easiest to identify, although you can prune this shrub at the same time as Forsythia. For these shrubs, remove the oldest, darkest, thickest branches by pruning them as close to the ground as possible. This will ensure that the Forsythia will bloom from stem to tip rather than blooming just on top of the plant, which occurs after repeated shearing and pruning only the top of the shrub. It will also ensure that the Yellowtwig and Redtwig Dogwood stems remain as yellow or red as possible every winter, which is one of its most beautiful attributes. Remove 25-30% of the shrub each year so that every 3-4 years the plant has completely rejuvenated itself. Each shrub should take about 5-10 minutes to prune each year.
2. Ornamental grasses: annually, prune as closely to the ground as possible, preferably in March. Some people prefer to prune them to the ground in the fall but if you do so, you need to get used to the "crew cut" look. If you wait until March, you'll have the beautiful dried grasses and the sound that the grass makes blowing in the wind all winter. If you prune them in spring, they only have a "crew cut" for a couple of weeks; they will begin growing back very quickly. Divide every 4-6 years by digging up the entire clump of grass and slicing the root ball with a sharp shovel. After 4-6 years, most grasses can be divided into 3-5 new grass clumps. You can use the new clumps elsewhere on your property, give them away, or dispose of them. Replant a small clump in the original location and divide again in 4-6 years as needed. Division is easiest after cutting the grasses back to the ground in spring but can also be done in the fall whether or not you prune them back to the ground at that time.
3. Perennials: divide as needed, generally every 3-5 years. Chrysanthemum (divide every 2-3 years) and Sedum will usually get a very large spread and create a hole in the middle, which indicates that they need to be divided. For perennials in general, if they appear to be growing out of bounds, divide in fall or spring. Divide in the same manner as the ornamental grasses. Perennials do well with a fall "clean up" by pruning the plants down to the ground in the fall. Hosta is easiest to divide in spring just as the plant begins to sprout.
4. Prune Butterfly Bush by waiting until you see new greenery beginning to peek out, and then cut all the old growth back to about ground level with a pair of loppers. This doesn't need to be done every year though. After a mild winter especially, it may not need to be cut back at all.
5. Shrub (*Bonica*) Roses and Meidiland Roses need to be pruned in late February or March while they are still dormant or it can be left until early spring when new growth begins. First, remove any dead, diseased or damaged branches. Remove dead wood to the nearest healthy bud. Pith (located in the inside center of the stem) should be creamy white on healthy, live wood, not brown or gray. If the inside of the stem is brown, prune the cane back farther. Make the cut at least one inch below the dead area. If there are no live buds, remove the entire branch or cane to the base of the plant. Examine canes carefully for canker (a darkened, sunburned-looking area) or other diseased areas. If disease is found, cut down to a good bud at least one inch below any evidence of disease. Prune to where the pith is healthy or to the plant's crown. Next, remove up to one third of the oldest, woodiest stems, cutting them back to the plant's crown. Finally, shape the plant as needed keeping in mind that shrub roses should not have more than 1/3 of their canopy height removed. These instructions sound more complicated than they really are. Shrub and Meidiland Roses really are very low maintenance.
6. Hypericum needs to be pruned down to the ground every year or every other year. This is best done in late winter or early spring.
7. Add mulch to beds to maintain a depth of 2-3" to retain moisture and to keep weeds down. Groundcover should be encouraged to take over beds and thus eliminating the need for extensive mulching every year. Do not mulch up to the base of trees or shrubs, leave a few inches of space around the bases of all plants and trees. Mulch around the base of plants and trees tends to rot the bark.
8. As a rule, do not use electric shears to prune any shrubs or trees. Allow plants to grow into their natural shape and form. Only remove errant branches or dead branches by pruning them back to the nearest branch crotch using either hand pruners or loppers.