Pruning guidelines

In today’s article, I’ll share with you pruning guidelines for selected landscape plants. You may wish to cut this out and keep it for future reference.

**Azalea:** Prune by thinning after bloom if necessary. Don’t prune at all if the plant looks good. Old overgrown plants can be renewed by being cut back close to ground level in February.

**Boxwood:** Prune by thinning or shearing almost any time of year. Avoid heavy pruning because the plant is slow to recover and may decline.

**Camellia:** Thin out branches after bloom if necessary. Camellias generally require little pruning.

**Clematis:** Some of these plants bloom on old wood and some on new wood, depending on species. It’s best to wait until after bloom to prune this plant. Thin out old wood. Some vigorous varieties can be pruned within twelve inches of ground level.

**Crape Myrtle:** This plant flowers on new growth so prune it when it is dormant. Make thinning and heading cuts to produce a desired form. For shrub forms, prune all branches close to ground level. For tree forms, save one to three of the most vigorous branches for the main trunk(s) and prune off low-growing branches to develop a tree-like growth habit.

**Holly:** There are many different growth habits and forms. Most are evergreen but some species are deciduous. If plants are prized for berries, prune in later winter, before spring flowering. If berries are not a concern, thinning (or shearing of small-leaf types) can be done any time during the growing season.

**Hydrangea (Bigleaf, French, Oakleaf):** Flower buds form on old wood. Prune after flowering.

**Hydrangea (Panicle, Smooth):** Blooms form on new wood. Prune when dormant and remove spent blossoms after flowering.

**Juniper:** Maintain shape or eliminate undergrowth on groundcover types by thinning during the growing season. Avoid heavy pruning to old wood because new growth will not occur.

**Mahonia:** As plants age, thin out old, leggy canes by cutting them back to ground level. Over time, this will result in a fuller, denser plant. Do this pruning in later winter or after fruiting.

**Nandina:** Prune same as Mahonia.
Oleander: Flowers appear on new growth so prune just prior to spring growth. Thin out old wood and head back top for desired shape and height.

Pyracantha: Prune after fruit set to remove non-fruiting wood.

Rose (Hybrid tea, Grandiflora, Floribunda): Prune in February to early spring, just before or shortly after new growth begins.

Rose (Climbing): After flowering, thin out old canes and head back remaining shoots by about one-third, depending on their vigor.

Rose-of-Sharon: This plant flowers on new growth so prune it in late winter.

Spirea: Prune by thinning after bloom. Most species responds well to severe pruning.

Viburnum: Prune after flowering or fruit set to thin out oldest, non-fruiting wood and to improve shape.

Wisteria: Prune after flowering. This is a very vigorous vine and it can be heavily pruned.

Larry Williams
Extension Agent, Horticulture
January 11, 2006