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# Can I Prune My Shrubs Or Flowers This Time Of Year?

Jerry Goodspeed

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ask A Specialist

**A weekly question/answer column**

# Can I Prune My Shrubs Or Flowers This Time Of Year?

*Jerry Goodspeed* answers:*

If pruning shrubs is on your "to do" list this winter, be careful how and which plants you cut. Only certain shrubs can be thinned this time of the year without sacrificing their spring blooms or causing them harm. The plants to prune now are late-blooming shrubs or those grown for their foliage rather than for their flowers.

- Late-blooming shrubs are those that typically bloom after Memorial Day. This includes many viburnums, sweet mock orange, some spirea, butterfly bush, hydrangea, hibiscus and pyracantha.
- Later blooming shrubs produce many of their flowers on the current year's growth. Pruning them this time of year encourages the plant to grow new foliage and flower buds, insuring an abundance of blooms later in the year.
- Pruning earlier flowering shrubs, those that bloom before Memorial Day, during the winter can prevent them from blooming. These shrubs are blooming on last year's growth. Pruning them before they bloom removes many of their flowers.
- The most important thing to remember when pruning any shrub is to maintain its natural shape and beauty. This is accomplished best by simply removing a few of the older canes at the base when the plant starts to get out of control. Shrubs that are only a year or two old probably do not need pruning because their canes are young and normally have not outgrown their welcome.

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* Jerry Goodspeed is Utah State University Extension Horticulturist