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Pruning Deciduous Shrubs and Woody Vines
Michigan State University Cooperative Extension Service
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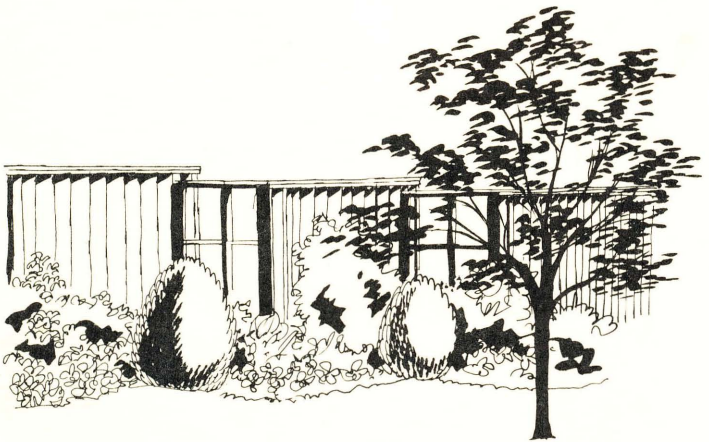
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EXTENSION FOLDER 281

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PRUNING DECIDUOUS SHRUBS AND WOODY VINES



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
EAST LANSING

Pruning Deciduous Shrubs and Woody Vines

By Joseph T. Cox and Fred B. Widmoyer, Extension Specialists in Landscape Architecture and in Horticulture Respectively

BEFO

Good pruning improves the general appearance, cleanliness and neatness of your property. Well-pruned plants and vines serve to frame your home in an attractive manner. They also add a bit of your own personality to an overall landscape design.

Most shrubs benefit from wise pruning. It makes your landscape more attractive by—

- maintaining the natural growth habits of your plants
- adapting plants to man's needs
- restoring vigor to older plants
- confining plants to a desired space, if necessary
- stimulating growth of foliage, stems, flowers and fruits
- preventing weak branching and malformations
- offsetting loss of roots at transplanting time
- correcting accidental damages to the plants
- eliminating a "blind corner" on your property caused by protruding or overhanging branches

Before taking up your pruning shears then, ask yourself, "Why am I pruning these shrubs or vines?" Your answer will determine how best to proceed.

DECIDUOUS SHRUBS

Deciduous shrubs are woody plants that lose their leaves each fall. There are early and mid-season types, such as Forsythia, Spirea and Mock-orange, and late flowering types such as Rose of Sharon (Hibiscus), Hydrangea, and Butterflybush.

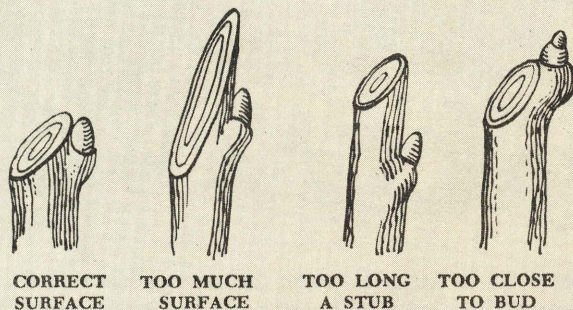
When to Prune:

Early flowering types should be pruned immediately after their flowering period. Early spring pruning will not injure them but will reduce the number of flower buds. Pruned branches of many of these varieties, if brought into the home, may be forced into flower. Pussy Willow, Forsythia and Floweringquince are especially easy to force.

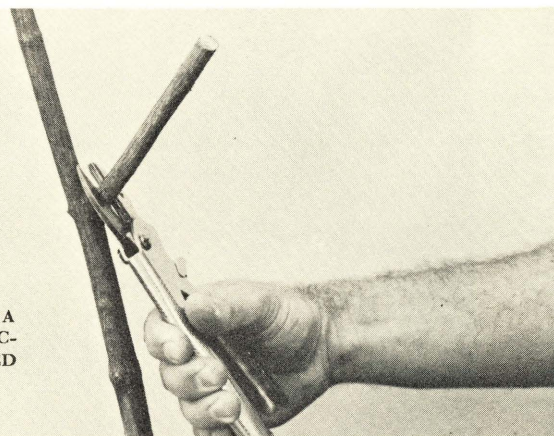
Late flowering types bloom in summer or fall. They should be pruned in early spring before flower buds have formed.

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS: Avoid early fall pruning—it tends to produce late immature growth. However, plants should be pruned back about $\frac{1}{3}$ their height when they are transplanted in the spring or fall. Pruning them at this time reduces the amount of water they need until their root systems are established.

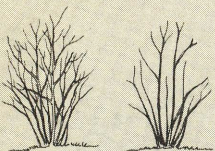
Cutting in relation to buds



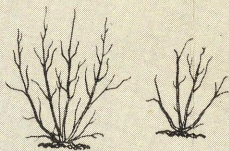
SLANT CUTS IN A PARALLEL DIRECTION OF DESIRED NEW STEMS.



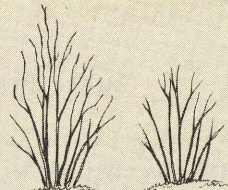
CUT BACK INTO HEALTHY WOOD BELOW THE POINT OF TROUBLE. CUTS SHOULD SLANT PARALLEL TO BUDS PRODUCING NEW GROWTH.



BEFORE (LEFT) AND AFTER PRUNING
AT PLANTING TIME



BEFORE (LEFT) AND AFTER THINNING
OUT



BEFORE (LEFT) AND AFTER HEADING
BACK

What and Where to Cut:

Good pruning is an art, and a little practice with the shears will give attractive results. Following are pruning directions to apply to your particular plant problems.

WHAT: Dead, diseased or damaged branches.

Where: Cut back into healthy wood, below the point of trouble, or at the base of the plant. Normally, cuts should slant parallel to buds producing new growth or parallel to the direction of desired new stems.

WHAT: Overgrown or wayward stems.

Where: Remove about one-third of length of overgrown stems one-fourth inch above a vigorous bud. This permits the remaining stems to conform to the natural shape of the shrub. (For wayward or interfering branches — those that criss-cross and rub against each other — cut back to base of the plant.)

WHAT: Old mature stems.

Where: Remove one-third of all the old mature stems (not one-third of the total number of stems in the plant). Cut as close to the ground as possible.

WHAT: Withered flower clusters.

Where: Cut one-fourth inch above the nearest vigorous bud. (If the shrub produces colorful ornamental fruit, you may wish to leave the clusters.)

WHAT: Sucker growth that sprouts out below graft.

Where: Cut below ground level and as close to the parent stem as possible.

What Not to Cut:

Do not cut new growth at the base of a plant unless you want to limit the size of the plant. To force the growth of side branches, pinch off ends of the main branches.

Do not cut all replacement stems which originate where old stems have been removed. Save several of the most vigorous ones.

Remove one-third of all old stems. Cut as close to ground as possible. Cut sucker growth below ground level and close to parent stem.



WOODY VINES

Vines generally show the need for pruning in early spring. Dead, diseased, damaged, and interfering branches can be removed most easily at this time. Pruning vines to keep them under control, tidy, luxuriant and free of suckers may be done throughout the growing season, but not later than August. Late pruning may produce new growth which will be injured by fall and winter freezes.

What and Where to Cut:

WHAT: Dead, diseased, damaged, and interfering branches.

Where: Cut dead, diseased, and damaged vines back to healthy wood. Interfering branches should be cut back below the point of interference, or all the way back to the junction with the main stem.

WHAT: Overgrown or elongated stems.

Where: Cut the top one-third of such stems. Cut back to a side branch so future growth will be from side buds rather than from terminal (end) bud.



Don't do a surface snip job when trimming vines which overhang around windows or over doorways, fences, gate openings. Instead follow each protruding end back to the main stem (black bars) and cut there. A large branch which is sending many shoots over the opening may require pruning back at its main junction.

WHAT: Branches which are creeping toward cracks in masonry or other openings.

Where: Cut out such branches at their origin from the main stem. Removal of 2 or 3 inches of terminal growth will also be effective, if done frequently. Often, large, old, entangled stems will need to be cut into several sections for easy removal.

WHAT: Loose or drooping stems.

Where: Cut back to a healthy bud well within the main structure of the vine.

WHAT: Old mature stems (those that are declining in vigor).

Where: Cut back one-third of the length of the old mature stems. Cut at the junction with the main stem of the vine.

WHAT: Sucker growth.

Where: Cut off below ground level and as close to the parent stem as possible.

What Not to Cut Out:

Seldom, if ever, cut the main trunk of a vine closer than 1 to 2 feet from the ground. This rule applies especially to grafted vines. Severe pruning may cause suckering and possible death of the graft.

Failure to Flower:

If vines fail to flower, check these possible causes and the suggested remedies:

CAUSE: Dead graft caused by winter killing or mechanical injury.

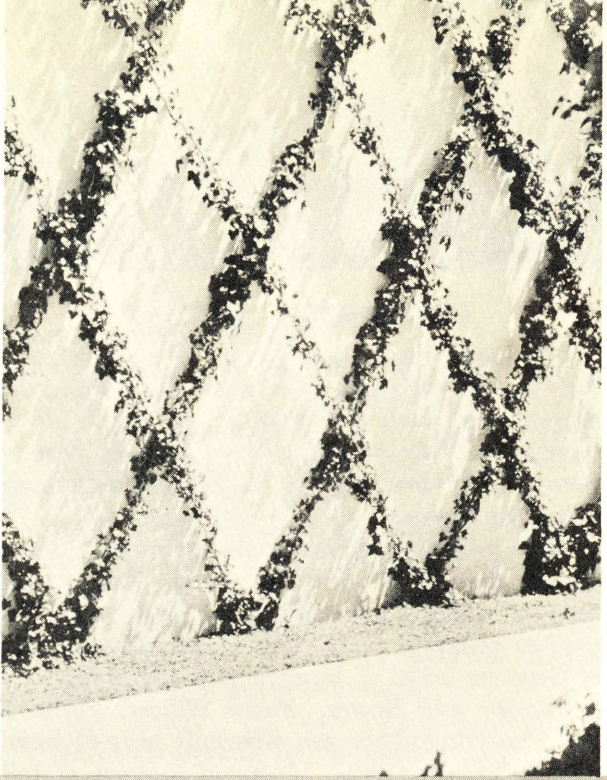
Remedy: Regraft or purchase a new vine.

CAUSE: Too much nitrogen fertilizer causing the vine to grow too vigorously.

Remedy: Increase phosphorous and potash fertilizer in the soil.

CAUSE: Crowding and lack of moisture.

Remedy: Thin out shrubs adjacent to the vine, remove dead wood, and apply a mulch to provide a more constant moisture supply. Water plants when needed.



Train English Ivy on a wire frame to give pattern to a blank wall. Watch for vines that are creeping toward cracks. Cut them at main stem.

