

botanics

Pruning flowering shrubs

This is a task to complete soon before growth starts, but there are some exceptions

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I've spent the last two weekends out gardening and one of the jobs that really needs attending to at this time of year is pruning. There are two main categories of shrubs when we think of pruning. There are the shrubs which flower on current season's growth and the shrubs which flower on the previous season's growth.

Shrubs that flower in spring, or very early summer, do so on growth that was made last year. These shrubs should be pruned immediately after flowering to ensure that enough growth is made during the coming season, allowing for no disruption to next year's flowers. Forsythia is an example.

Shrubs which flower from mid-summer onwards, are flowering on the growth that is made during this coming growing season. These shrubs can be pruned in early spring or just before growth starts or anytime during the winter/dormant season. A good example here is Fuchsia. Cut it back hard in spring and it will flower brilliantly later in the summer.

Hardy plants

There are always some exceptions to this rule. During the dormant season most hardy plants can be pruned without fear of damage. There are, however, some plants which are somewhat tender. These plants have been brought to Irish gardens from the southern hemisphere or parts of North America or Asia.

Pruning these plants in winter can cause cold or wet damage. If you are



Calceolaria and (inset left) Wisteria.

lucky enough to grow Calceolaria integrifolia, or plants such as Convolvulus cneorum or Lavender, damage can be done and plants can be killed by winter pruning. Prune plants that are sun worshippers or tender just before growth begins, around the end of February.

This ensures that new growth on the plant happens as the temperature increases. Most of these more tender plants flower on current season's growth and can be pruned at any stage from spring onwards.

For shrubs flowering on current season's growth, prune them at any time during the dormant or spring/early summer period. Remember however, that the later you prune, the later the shrub will flower. This may reduce your enjoyment of the plant, so best to prune just as growth is about to start.

Climbers are another group of plants that generally need to be pruned regularly. Clematis is a very popular climber. One of the most popular is Clematis montana and its various varieties.

This one can be cut back, after flowering, in late spring and this

should be done to keep the plant under control otherwise it will invade neighbouring plants. There are many other types of Clematis which fit into different pruning categories.

Wisteria

Wisteria is a beautiful early summer flowering climber.

This plant can be pruned during the dormant season, cutting each of the new shoots back to two buds from the old growth. During summer, after flowering, you can cut new growth back as needed to keep control.

It really is very hard to kill a plant, by pruning at the wrong time, in most instances the worst that can happen is that the plant doesn't flower well following a good prune but rest assured it will be back to normal the following year.



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