

Time Pruning Correctly on Your Trees and Shrubs

By Matt Lenhardt, Citrus County Horticulture Extension Agent

Pruning is a beneficial, cultural maintenance method that improves aesthetic appearance, health and vigor, and promotes flowering and fruit production. Pruning is specimen specific, so knowing the specimen's growth requirements are important before planting to make sure the right plant is in the right place. This will help ensure a healthy planting and may reduce the need for pruning.

Prune spring or summer-flowering plants after they have flowered and before they set buds for next year. This is important because some flowering specimens such as azaleas, spireas, and dogwoods set buds on the previous year's growth. Pruning in the late summer or fall after they have set buds on this old growth would reduce the amount of flowers for next year. Pruning plants such as crape myrtle, glossy abelia, or hibiscus that produce flowers on current season's growth is recommended while dormant, just before spring flush.

The winter months are typically the best for pruning deciduous trees such as oaks or maples when they are in dormancy. They can be pruned at other times of the year, just as long as it is not done just before going into dormancy or just after breaking dormancy. Of course, if we get a warm spell during the winter (which often happens in Florida) that starts to bring trees out of dormancy, new buds and leaf growth may appear and become susceptible to the next blast of freezing weather.

For more information on pruning or other gardening issues, please contact the Citrus County Extension office at 527-5700 or stop by the Master Gardener Volunteer plant clinic consultation desk Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. We are located in the Lecanto Government complex at 3650 W. Sovereign Path, Ste.1, Lecanto, FL, 34461.

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