

The Pruning of Plants-Revision Notes

Introduction

This is a revision handout only, it is important for students to read carefully the handout released by Ray Broughton with the title 'The Science of Pruning Plant Successfully '

The Pruning Groups

Plants Which Flower before June

These plants must have made the plant growth in the previous year in order to flower early in the next year. It is therefore important to prune the plant immediately after they have flowered, which is normally in May/early June.

Plant examples include:

- Philadelphus coronarius
- Forsythia x intermdia
- Berberis darwinii
- Weigela florida

Plants Which Flower from June Onwards

These plants if pruned very early in the season (early March) will have the opportunity to make growth which will produce flowers in mid to late summer ie from June onwards. It is therefore important to prune these plants very early in the season. If weather allows this could be as early as the first week of March. Clearly the actual date of pruning depends on how severe the winter is and if spring is progressing with warmer conditions.

Examples include:

- Rosa (bush Roses)
- Buddleja davidii
- Cornus alba
- Leycesteria formosa

Plants Which Do Not Require Seasonal Pruning As Part of an Annual Maintenance Program

These are plants which are only pruned as and when required. This could include removing branches which are blocking a path or a window of the house. Pruning for shape of the plant can be conducted normally after flowering, but once again the pruning is minimal and not based on a season maintenance program.

Examples include:

- Camellia spp
- Rhododendron spp
- Pieris spp
- Ceanothus spp

Rejuvenation Pruning

This is a severe method of pruning which is only used if the plant has overgrown its position and is not attractive in its present form. It is important to note that this method of pruning, which involves cutting down the whole plant down to about 15 cm from the ground; is only suitable for plants which have multiple stems arising from ground level. There is a high risk factor with this type of pruning which can be reduced by:

- Feeding the plant in the year before pruning.
- Ensuring the plant is not dry for at least six months after pruning.
- To complete this pruning in early April (Remember you must not disturb nesting birds).

It is also important to be aware that vigorous shoots will develop from the stumps. These vigorous shoots must be tipped (remove the boss bud) when the shoots are about 20 cm in length.

Examples include:

- Berberis spp
- Kerria spp
- Hydrangea spp
- Pyracantha spp

The Pruning of Hedges

The majority of hedges can be clipped between 22nd July to the 22nd August each year. The reason for these dates is that the sex hormone is masking the growth hormone owing to the high light levels in the Summer. The regrowth following this pruning will take at least six months which helps to keep the hedge in an attractive form.

It is important to appreciate that hard pruning of hedges (pruning into the hardwood) should not be attempted until April (but do remember you must complete a risk assessment to avoid disturbing any nesting birds, it is illegal to disturb nesting birds) or the preferred time of October. In this case the growth hormone masks the sex hormone as a result of the low light levels in the Spring and Autumn. This will result in new growth from older wood.

Examples include (for summer and spring/autumn pruning of hedges)

- *Fagus sylvatica*
- *Taxus baccata*
- *Thuja plicata*
- *Prunus lusitanica*

On Moodle there are Photographs of pruning technique. These are listed under Practical Horticulture.