

# Pruning Shrubs for Fruit and Beauty

**Kathy Wiederholt**

Fruit Project Manager

NDSU Carrington Research Extension Center

Kathy.Wiederholt@ndsu.edu

www.Facebook.com/CRECFruit

Most shrubs benefit from a yearly pruning. Pruning makes the plants healthier, stronger and usually more attractive.

If you count on your shrubs for only spring blossoms, like lilacs or forsythias, the best time to prune is right after they bloom. This way you enjoy the flowers early and then the plants have time during the year to produce new growth and blossoms for the following year. Often, blooming occurs on the previous year's growth. Get the pruning done as quickly as possible so that new shoots can grow, produce flower buds and then turn brown and woody for winter dormancy.

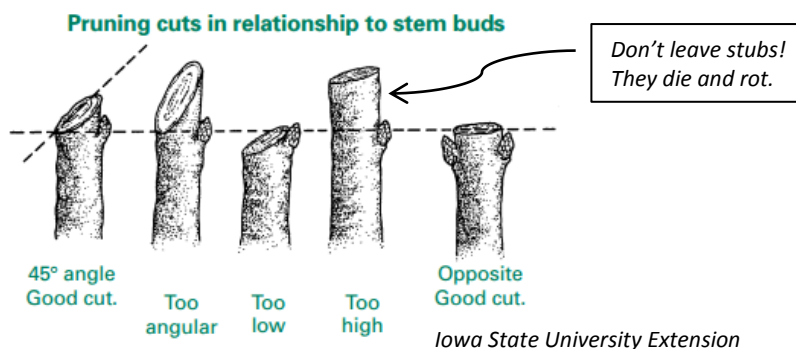
If your shrub produces fruit it could be more complicated – but we keep it simple by just pruning the plants in the early spring dormant period. During the year, a fruiting plant is actually ripening fruit AND growing new shoots AND setting new flower buds, all at the same time. If you pruned after harvest, it would stimulate growth and there would not be enough time left for the plant to get ready for winter. So prune in early spring and try to get the pruning done before any of the buds start to grow. Most of a plant's energy is stored in the roots, so by removing undesirable growth while it is dormant, you will be directing that energy to the branches that are left and not letting the plant waste energy on shoots you will be removing. The fruit on pruned plants will be larger and sweeter.

## Basic Steps to Pruning

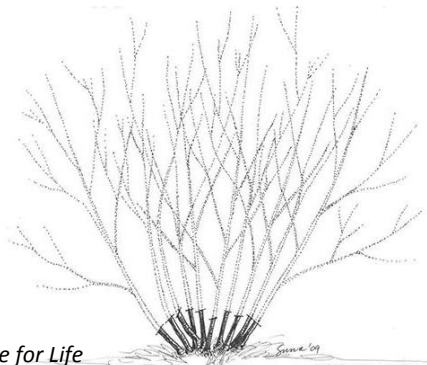
- Prune early, when the plant is young, to direct its future growth, rather than pruning it later in an effort to “correct” old growth.
  - ✓ “Prune Now or Regret it Later” – Kathy Wiederholt *You can quote me on this!*
- **Renewal Prune** by removing large, old branches at their bases
  - ✓ But keep an assortment of ages of branches
- Make **Thinning Cuts** to increase air movement and light
  - ✓ Envision: “Upward and Outward” – Picture sunlight entering the plant
  - ✓ Remove inward- and downward-growing shoots and branches
  - ✓ Remove spindly, weak growth and do a general thinning
- Make **Heading Cuts** to direct future growth



How to make pruning cuts on any woody plant:  
(Shrubs or trees)

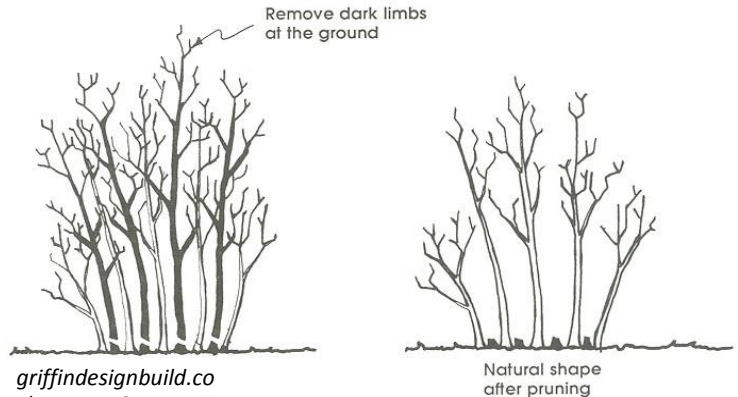


## Renewal Pruning



Space for Life  
Montreal Botanical Garden (Suzanne Maurice)

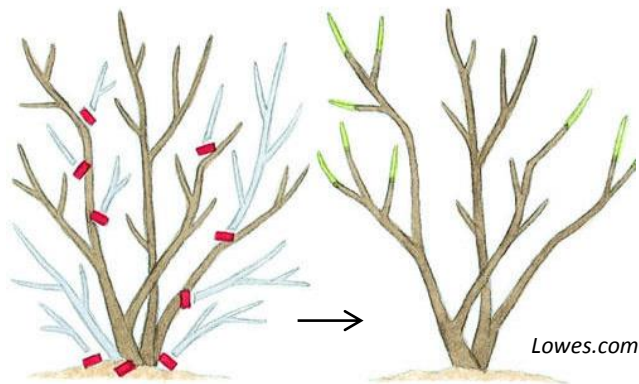
**Drastic:** OK for some plants like spirea, potentilla, old forsythia.



griffindesignbuild.co  
The Bruce Co.

**Multi-Year:** Best for most flowering and fruiting plants. Remove  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  of old growth each year.

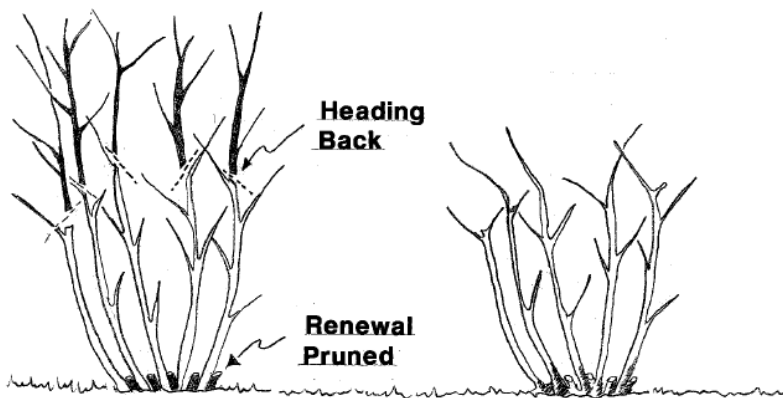
## Thinning Cuts



Lowes.com

**Thinning cuts:** These open the plant to light and air movement and don't cause much regrowth. Will re-direct growth to the nearest bud or branch. Make proper cuts, without leaving stubs, just above a bud or side branch so that growth is 'upward and outward'.

## Heading Cuts



The Bruce Co.

Proper **heading** lowers a branch back to a lateral bud or shoot which is less vigorous than a vertical shoot.

On alternate-bud plants, it redirects growth. For opposite-bud plants, it thickens the outer leaf area.