Pruning Spring Flowering Trees & Shrubs

When you can't wait to get started in the spring garden, a good task to undertake is pruning. Most trees and shrubs benefit from annual pruning. It keep them in shape, gets rid of dead and diseased wood and encourages new growth. But not all trees and shrubs should be pruned early, especially some of the flowering ones.

Early spring bloomers set their flower buds the fall before. Pruning them early in the spring would mean losing some blossoms. Most of the time this is not what you want. However there are exceptions. It's often easier to prune when you can see the shape of the plant, before the branches are masked by leaves. Trees and shrubs that are in need of a good shaping could sacrifice a few blooms to be invigorated by a spring pruning.

There are no hard and fast rules, but here is a of list of commonly grown spring flowering trees and shrubs and the best time to prune them.

Trees and Shrubs to Prune in Late Spring/Summer, After Bloom

Azalea (Rhododendron species)
Beautybush (Kolkwitzia amabilis)
Bridal Wreath Spirea (Spirea x vanhouttei)
Flowering Crabapple (Malus species and cultivars)
Forsythia (forsythia x intermedia)
Hawthorn (Crataegus species and cultivars)
Hydrangea, Bigleaf (Hydrangea macrophylla)
Lilac (Syringa vulgaris)
Magnolia (Magnolia species and cultivars)
Mockorange (Philadelphus coronarius)
Mountain Laurel (Kalmia latifolia)
Rhododendron (Rhododendron species)
Serviceberry (Amelanchier x grandiflora)
Slender Deutzia (deutzia gracilis)
Weigela (Weigela florida)

Trees and Shrubs to Prune in Early Spring, While Dormant

You can still get your pruner out this spring to shape the following list of trees and shrubs, while they are still dormant.

Bradford Pear (Pyrus calleryana)
Butterfly Bush (Buddleia Davidii)
Crape Myrtle (Lagerstroemia indica)
Flowering Dogwood (Cornus florida)
Flowering Plum (Prunus blireana)
Glossy Abelia (Abelia x grandiflora)
Golden Rain Tree (Koelreuteria paniculata)
Honeysuckle (Lonicera fragrantissiam)
Hydrangea, Peegee (Hydrangea paniculata 'Grandiflora')
Potentilla (Potentilla fruticosa)
Redbud (Cercis canadensis)
Spirea (except Bridal Wreath) (Spirea japonica))
Wisteria (Wistera species)