

What to prune in winter - and How

Discover which plants should be pruned in winter, while they are dormant. Adapted (slightly) from [BBC Gardeners' World Magazine](#) December 25, 2018.

Many garden plants benefit from pruning, but it's important to prune at the right time of year, in the right way. Many plants should be pruned in the winter months, while they're dormant. Pruning in winter encourages flowers and fruit, can encourage a good shape, promotes strong growth and helps to stop disease taking hold. Do not prune when the temperature is 20° or below however as this extreme cold can cause dieback in pruned limbs. Plants which should be pruned in the winter months while they're dormant include the following:

Grapevines: Prune [grapevines](#) by cutting back to a main 'rod', or arm, that is trained out vertically along support wires. Don't prune outside the deeply dormant season, otherwise the wounds will bleed sap.



Autumn-fruiting raspberries: Cut all the canes of [autumn-fruiting raspberries](#) down to within 2 inches of the ground every year in Winter. This encourages them to send up fresh new stems that will bear fruit in the coming autumn. Summer-fruiting raspberries should be cut down after they've cropped, in late summer.



Group 3 clematis: Prune [Group 3 clematis](#) (i.e. late flowering) in February by cutting the plant down to 18 inches above the ground. See BBC's guide to [winter-pruning clematis](#). Most other groups of clematis only need a light tidy up after flowering. Hard pruning in February is optional for Viticella Group varieties. Find out more about [clematis groups](#).



Fig: Prune fig trees in Winter when deeply dormant, otherwise the wounds will bleed sap. With fan-trained plants, prune so lots of evenly spaced, straight stems radiate out from a short trunk, and remove any that grow out from the wall. Read BBC guide to [pruning a fig tree](#).



Wisteria: These vigorous climbers need pruning twice a year, in December and again in summer, to keep them in check and promote flowering. In winter, prune all sideshoots back to three or four buds. Then after summer flowering, cut back all whippy shoots to 12 inches. Find out more about [pruning wisteria in winter](#).



Fruit bushes Fruit bushes, including blueberries and [blackcurrants](#), plus [gooseberries and red currants](#) can be pruned in winter. As a general rule, remove some old wood each year, creating a goblet shape and leaving healthy young branches that will produce large crops in years to come.



Roses: Many types of rose can be pruned in winter, including floribundas, hybrid teas, [shrub roses](#) and [climbing roses](#). Rambling roses are pruned in late summer but can be renovated in winter. As a general rule, cut back thin, weak stems the most, and thick, vigorous stems the least. Aim to leave plants anything from 6 to 18 inches tall, depending on the original size of the plant and your preference.



Apple and pear trees: These should be pruned from November to mid-March to encourage fruiting. Aim to create a wine-glass shape, with evenly spaced branches rising up from the trunk in a circle around a hollow centre. Cut off any water shoots at their very base and remove any dead, diseased or crossing branches. Read BBC's practical guide to [pruning apple and pear trees](#).



Deciduous ornamental trees: From November to March, remove smaller branches arising from the trunk to create a clean, bare stem at least 90-120cm tall. Remove any branches that impede access or block mowing, but cut sensitively, thinning out rather than chopping back the whole canopy. Read BBC's guide to [winter-pruning trees and shrubs](#). Do not prune Maples (Acer) until first bud



Deciduous shrubs: Deciduous shrubs that often outgrow their welcome should be pruned in winter, including [cotinus](#), [berberis](#), [flowering currants](#) and [magnolias](#). Read BBC guide to [winter-pruning trees and shrubs](#).



How to winter-prune trees and shrubs

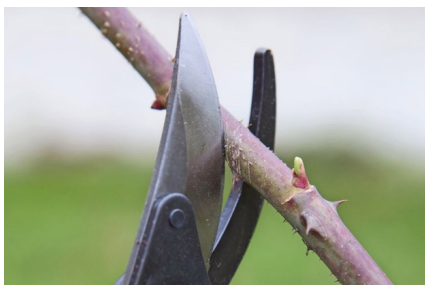
Adapted from [BBC Gardeners' World Magazine](#) – March 24, 2019

[Pruning](#) rejuvenates [shrubs](#) and [trees](#), and helps younger plants in their formative stages by establishing a good shape. Winter is an ideal time to prune some plants, as the lack of leaves on deciduous trees and shrubs enables you to see what you're doing more clearly. What's more, since sap is not as active during the winter, cuts are less likely to 'bleed', and the tree or shrub sustains less of a shock than being chopped when sap is in full flow. Wounds will callous over just as they would in nature, and this natural healing process should happen before growth begins again in spring.

The first priority in any pruning regime is to remove any [damaged](#) or [diseased](#) wood. Secondly, any [branches that cross and chafe](#) should be sorted out by removing the least important bough or cutting it back lower down to an outward facing bud. Pruning out lengths of bud-bearing stems concentrates the energy of the shrub or tree into those buds that remain, so when growth starts again in the spring it will be more vigorous.

However, it's essential to make the cut in the right place. Bad pruning can result in die-back, poor wound recovery and – potentially – unhealthy plants. Follow our 'do's and don'ts' guide to getting it right every time.

Step 1: Don't [prune too far away](#) from the bud. This can result in the wood between the cut and the bud below dying, often affecting the health of the bud. If the bud fails to grow, die back can cause the whole stem to die. [Your cut should be less than ¼ inch beyond the bud](#) but see Step 2.



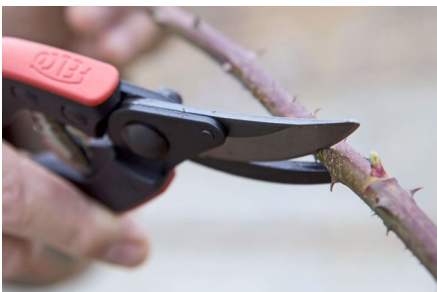
How to winter-prune trees and shrubs – pruning too far from a bud

Step 2: Don't prune too close to the bud. This often results in damaging the bud itself, jeopardizing its ability to grow into a leaf or flower. Pruning too close to the bud can also cause the branch to die back further down the stem.



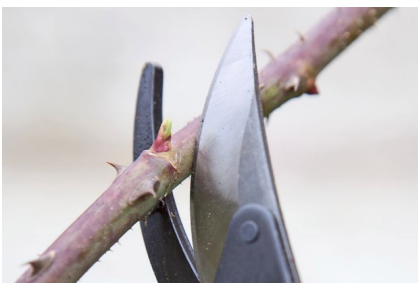
How to winter-prune trees and shrubs – pruning too close to a bud

Step 3: Don't cut at the wrong angle. This will leave a pointed stub of stem above the bud, which can mean the stem may die back as far as the bud and possibly beyond it. The angle of your cut should be the same as the angle of the bud



How to winter-prune trees and shrubs – cutting at the wrong angle

Step 4: Do cut just above a bud, at the same angle as the bud so that any water that hits the cut runs off to prevent rot. Always use clean and sharp pruners to prevent the spread of diseases and ensure there is no snagging.



How to winter-prune trees and shrubs – cutting just above a bud

