

## Planting And Care Of Shrubs

In general, trees and shrubs are planted and cared for in the same way, the difference between them being chiefly one of height. One definition of the difference, however, is that while a tree has only one trunk, a shrub has several stems or trunks.

Not so long ago the number of reliable shrubs was quite limited, but today the many new hybrids have lengthened the list and the gardener's choice is almost endless. No matter the region, it is now possible to plant shrubs that will satisfy color needs, bloom at various seasons, cover bare spots where grass won't grow, or grow in such profusion and depth that screening purposes are served.

Shrubs are valuable to the gardener because they bridge the gap between trees and flowers. As do trees, they serve as boundary markers, soften the lines of buildings, act as a decorative background for flower beds and hide unsightly views.

Like flowers, they add character and shape to the garden, blooming forth with colorful blossoms and attracting birds with their berries. One big item in their favor is that they mature rapidly, yet remain as hardy and long-lived as trees.

Planting of shrubs is little different from planting of trees. Early spring is the most favorable time since it gives the plant a long spell of good growing weather to get reestablished. In the milder sections of the country, however, transplanting may be done through the winter months. In New England, evergreens may be planted in September and May, and deciduous shrubs in October and May.

Dry roots are the chief cause of planting failures, and steps should be taken to prevent this—i.e., balling and burlapping, and heeling in. After receiving shrubs from a nursery, water as soon as possible; shade them from sunshine at first, mulch the ground around them, and prune back severely.

The older the plant you get, the more severely it will have to be cut back, so that in the long run, you come out just as well buying the less expensive, smaller shrubs. Forsythia and azalea may be moved while in flower, but most plants should not.

Watering in the fall, before the ground freezes, is important for box, azalea, rhododendron, mountain laurel and broadleaf evergreens, whose leaves lose moisture in winter.

Pruning of shrubs helps to keep them young and vigorous. Rather than cutting all branches off to an even length, prune out the older branches, even though they may be sound. With lilacs, for example, use a keyhole saw, and cut as close to the ground as possible, cutting out the oldest stems.

Some shrubs need pruning every year, especially those which have dead branches as a result of winterkill. (These include some deutzias, hydrangeas, buddleia, spireas and privets.) Other shrubs such as rhododendron, azaleas, magnolia and buddleia should have the flower heads pruned off after blooming.

### About The Author

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