

Garden Bytes Series: Why Isn't my Shrub Blooming?

These are the main reasons

- Age of the shrub
- Environmental stress
- Improper fertilization techniques
- Pruning at the wrong time
- Pesticide use

But the #1 reason is:

Not planting the right plant in the right place!

Age of the shrub:

The plant may be **too young**--

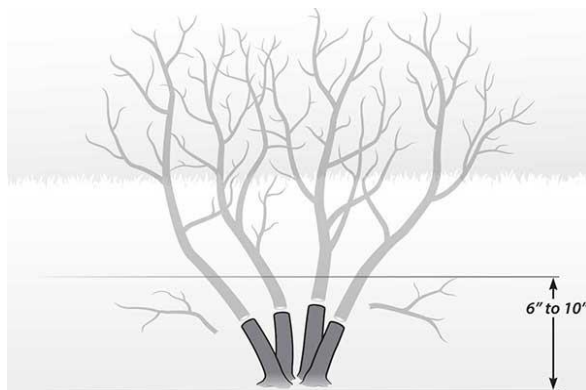
- Many won't bloom for 2-3 years after transplanting

Or **too old!**

- E.g., Lilacs, mock oranges, rhododendron, dogwood, spirea, honeysuckle, hydrangea, forsythia, weigela
- "Rejuvenation" pruning may help
- Lilacs <https://hortnews.extension.iastate.edu/1993/2-10-1993/lilac.html>
- Rhododendron <https://www.rhododendron.org/v34n3p125.htm>
- This severe pruning may delay blooming for 2-3 years

Rejuvenation Pruning for **old shrubs

Hard Pruning



Gradual pruning--better for plant



**Do your research--make sure that YOUR shrub is one that responds well to hard-pruning

Environmental Stress: Late freeze--

Spring flowering shrubs will lose flowers--won't bloom that year

- Flower buds will probably lose the buds and won't bloom later this spring (or at best, very weakly).
 - If the flower buds are black, then they are dead and need to be removed. If the flower buds are still green, then they should be left on the plants because they could still bloom.
 - Even if the flower buds appear to be okay, there's a chance that as the flower buds open the petals could show some discoloration from the freezing weather.
- Summer blooming shrubs should be fine

Environmental Stress: Not enough light—

- What is the plant’s light requirement?

Shrubs that like sun

Abelia	Deciduous Azalea	Banana	Buddleia: Seedless Butterfly Bush	Callicarpa: Beautyberry	Ceanothus: California Lilac
Native Ceanothus: Wild Lilac	Chaenomeles: Flowering Quince	Chimonanthus: Wintersweet	Clethra: Summersweet	Cornus: Red Twig Dogwood	Corylopsis: Winter Hazel
Corylus: Filberts and Hazels	Cotinus: Smoke Tree	Daphne	Edgeworthia: Chinese Paper Bush	Elaeagnusa: Silverberry/Goumi Berry	Hardy Gardenia
Gaultheria Shallon: Salal	Hamamelis: Witch Hazel	Healthers and Heaths	Hebe	Holodiscus: Oceanspray	Itea: Sweetspire
Lagerstroemia: Crape Myrtle	Lonicera: Honey Suckle	Mahonia: Oregon Grape	Osmaronia: Indian Plum	Philadelphus: Mock Orange	Physocarpus: Ninebark
Native Ribes: Red Flowering Currant	Native Huckleberry	Viburnum Arrowwood	Native Viburnum trilobum: Cranberrybush	Roses	

Shade tolerant shrubs

Abelia	Red Buckeye (Aesculus pavia)	Alder-Leaved Serviceberry (Amelanchier-alnifolia)	Aucuba (Aucuba japonica)	Cornus Sericea: Red Twig Dogwood	Corylus Cornuta: Beaked Hazelnut
Deciduous Azalea	Camellia	Chaenomeles	Coprosma: Mirror Plant	Corylopsis: Winter Hazel	Daphne
Edgeworthia: Chinese Paper Bush	Dwarf Fothergilla (Fothergilla gardenia)	Hardy Gardenia	Hebe	Hydrangea	Hydrangea anomala ssp. petiolaris: Climbing Hydrangea
Kalmia latifolia: Mountain Laurel	Japanese Rose (Kerria japonica)	Leucothoe axillaris: Coast Leucothoe	Loropetalum: Chinese Fringe-Flower	Paeonia suffruticosa: Tree Peony	Pieris japonica: Andromeda
Physocarpus: Ninebark	Salix: Willow	Sarcococca: Sweet Box	Skimmia japonica: Japanese Skimmia	Vaccinium: Huckleberry	Viburnum dentatum: Arrowwood Viburnum

Environmental Stress:

Not enough water

- Especially important for first 3 years as roots establish. After that, water 1 inch/2 weeks if there is no rain
- MULCH!
- Heat stress makes problem worse!

Too much water--drown the roots!

Environmental Stress-root problems

Root restriction--plants take up phosphorus necessary for flowering

- Overly wet soil--clay
- Container bushes that are root-bound
- Inadvertent root pruning—digging

Too much nitrogen fertilizer

Results in lots of lush green growth--but no flowers!

- Know your shrub's requirements. If fertilizer is required, do it in late winter or early spring as leaves are coming out
Shrubs planted in or around lawns
- Taking up too much of lawn fertilizer!
- Soil test to determine if bone meal (phosphorus) will correct

Pruning timing

- Spring flowering shrubs should be pruned as soon as flowers fade--end of June at the latest
 - If you prune after that, you're removing next year's flower buds
- Summer flowering shrubs-Do NOT prune in summer--will remove current year's flowers
- Rejuvenation pruning--energy goes into making leaves, not flowers
- Unintentional--deer, bear, rabbits, etc., did it

Spring bloomers-Prune AFTER flowering (no later than last week of June)

Akebia	Azalea	Buddleia- Butterfly Bush	Choisya-- Mexican Orange	Daphne	Deutzia
Elaeagnus- Russian Olive,	Silverberry	Escallonia	Euphorbia- Spurge	Forsythia	Helianthemum -Sunrose
Hibiscus	Hydrangea	Jasminum- asmine	Kerria	Kolkwitzia Beauty bush	Lonicera japonica- Honeysuckle
Magnolia	Mahonia- Oregon Grape	Passiflora- Passionflower	Philadelphus- Mock Orange	Pieris	Rhododendron
Ribes-Currant	Rosemary	Schizophragma- Climbing Hydrangea	Syringa-Lilac	Viburnum-has specific pruning requirements	Weigela
Wisteria					

Summer bloomers-Prune LATE WINTER

Abelia	Albizia- Mimosa as growth begins	Aucuba	Callicarpa- Beautyberry	Camellia	Campsis- Trumpet Creeper	Caryopteris- Bluebeard
Ceanothus- California Lilac	Clerodendron- Glorybower before growth	Cistus- Rockrose	Cornus alba- Tatarian Dogwood	Cotinus- Smoke Tree	Evergreen ferns	Hamamelis- Witch Hazel
Hibiscus-late spring	Lavatera- Tree Mallow	Lavendula- Lavendar	Leycesteria- Himalayan Honeysuckle	Lonicera nitida-.Boat Honeysuckle	Ornamental grasses	Photinia
Pinus-Pine when candling	Pyracantha- firethorn	Salix caprea- French Pussy Willow	Santolina	Spiraea	Trachelospermum- Confederate Jasmine	

Improper pesticide use

- Includes herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides
- READ THE LABELS!

#1 rule of thumb for healthy, happy plants

Plant the right plant in the right place!

- Do your homework--light, water, temperature, soil, space requirements
- Believe the nursery labels!

Learn more!

Rejuvenation Pruning

- <https://www.landscapemanagement.net/step-by-step-how-to-perform-rejuvenation-pruning/>
- <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/shrubs/shgen/rejuvenation-pruning-tips.htm>

Shrubs for light and shade:

- Recommended native shrubs and trees PNW
<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/sites/default/files/documents/1/nativeplantreclist.pdf>
- Portland Nursery Shrubs for sun and shade <https://portlandnursery.com/shrubs/>
- List of light shade/drought resistant shrubs
<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/gardening/flowers-shrubs-trees/drought-tolerant-plants-shade>

Portland Nursery Pruning Calendar

- https://portlandnursery.com/docs/trees/Pruning_Calendar.pdf