

While you may think of shrubs as "just bushes," they are actually much more. Shrubs come in a variety of shapes and sizes, with many different types of foliage. Some shrubs produce berries, and others even provide fragrance! No matter what effect you are trying to achieve, there is undoubtedly a shrub that will fit the bill. A shrub is distinguished from a tree by its multiple stems and shorter height, usually under 6 m (20 ft) tall. Plants of many species may grow either into shrubs or trees, depending on their growing conditions. Shrubs in common garden practice are generally broad leaf plants though some smaller conifers also shrubby in structure.

Certain varieties of shrubs can be clipped as topiary, suitable species or varieties have dense foliage and many small leafy branches growing close together. Many shrubs respond well to renewal pruning, in which hard cutting back to a 'stool' results in long new stems known as "canes". Other shrubs respond better to selective pruning to reveal their structure and character.

Creeping shrubs, like [junipers](#), can serve as evergreen ground covers. Low, bushy shrubs like Japanese spirea and [potentilla](#) blend nicely into flower gardens or the front of a planting around the house. Larger, rounded shrubs can be grouped into clusters to define space or create privacy. More compact cultivars that mature when around 4 feet high, like Newport viburnum, can be used around a house without any pruning. Taller shrubs, like Allegheny viburnum, make good screens for the property perimeter. Vertical shrubs that are shaped like an upright cone or pillar, such as Skyrocket juniper, create formality or emphasis in the garden. They can be striking when placed on either side of a doorway or garden gate.

Using a medley of shrub shapes offers design interest that goes much deeper than the leaves and flowers. And when you also take into account the other qualities shrubs have to offer, you'll see that they are an asset to any kind of garden.

Plant fragrant flowered shrubs near doors or windows so you can enjoy their perfume both indoors and out. Cut flowering stems from your shrubs and bring them indoors to use in big bouquets & flower arrangements.

Plant shrubs that will flower in succession through the growing season. Get some spring, summer, and fall bloomers, then play them up, using other plants as supporting characters. Match the flower colour of a viburnum with a cluster of daffodils. Echo the colour of a [rhododendron](#) with a pot of pink [pansies](#). Plant a coniferous shrub garden for winter fun. Use [evergreens](#) with a variety of different shapes and leaf colours -- gold, blue, gray, and green.

Consider changing an overgrown shrub into a multi-stemmed tree. This works nicely with flowering plums, black haw viburnums, winged [euonymus](#), and [lilacs](#), all of which can grow to be 12 to 15 feet tall.

Begin by removing small, crowded upright stems to reveal a handful of shapely mature branches that can serve as trunks. Cut side shoots off the trunks up to about 5 feet off the ground, creating a tree form. Continue pruning as needed to keep the trunks clear of growth.

New shrubs need some special care right from the start to ensure a healthy life and good growth.

Planting Shrubs in Your Garden

Avoid planting if there's a frost - place roots into moist soil until conditions improve or if the soil is too dry or too wet.

Remember when selecting your shrub big is not always best, smaller specimens will tend to grow better and adapt to their home more quickly resulting in a stronger and healthier plant.

Once you have removed your plant from its pot give a good soak in a bucket of water, a dense root mass can be destructive if you don't tease the root apart which could result in strangling the crown, so slice off circling or tangled roots before planting shrubs grown in containers. Use a pair of sharp pruning shears to slice off circling roots and loosen up matted roots. Releasing the healthy roots inside the root ball, planting the shrub in good soil, and keeping the area moist will encourage vigorous new root growth.

Dig a hole a third wider than the roots and to the same depth as the shrub's roots, place the shrub in the hole. Fill in with soil and mound towards the base of the shrub.

If you're growing your shrub in a container, half fill a large tub with soil-based potting compost and place your shrub on top. Fill the tub with more soil to the base of the tree, water well and feed regularly.

Pruning

Begin by removing old, weak, damaged, or crowded branches at their base. But don't indiscriminately shear off the top of the plant. The terminal buds on the branch tips release hormones that encourage root growth and maintain a slow, orderly pattern of growth. These are both desirable qualities worth preserving in your shrubs. Once your shrubs are in the ground and growing well, they won't need too much maintenance.

Caring for Garden Shrubs

Give your garden shrub the extra attention they need, and they'll reward your efforts with vigorous growth. Shrubs can easily be damaged or killed by cold winds, so position can be key, it might even be necessary to put up some means up wind defence to prevent cold winds racing through your plant or even bubble wrap those delicate species, although far from elegant, makes a neat coat for the shrub and ensures that you will have a nice-looking plant waiting for you when spring arrives. This also works for coniferous evergreens like arborvitae. Be sure to water these shrubs well in the fall so they'll have plenty of moisture stored.

Deadhead hybrid [rhododendrons](#) and mountain laurels to increase next year's bloom. Once the flowers begin to fade, use your thumb and forefinger (or [pruning](#) shears) to cut off the soft, immature flowering cluster. Just be careful not to damage nearby buds or shoots, which will soon be sprouting into new branches.

Shrubs with Fragrant Flowers

[Butterfly bush](#)

Blue spirea

Summersweet

[Fothergilla](#)

[Winter Honeysuckle](#)

Fantasy [lilac](#)

Dwarf Korean [lilac](#)

Miss Kim [lilac](#)

French [lilac](#)

[Witch hazel](#)

Burkwood viburnum

Fragrant snowball viburnum

Korean spice viburnum

Some Shrubs for Seasonal Blooms

Spring

[Azaleas](#)

[Rhododendrons](#)

Ornamental quince

Cotoneaster

Forsythia

[Fothergilla](#)

[Lilac](#)

Viburnum

Summer

[Butterfly bush](#)

Scotch [heather](#)

Blue spirea

Summersweet

[Hydrangea](#)

Rose-of-Sharon

[St. John's wort](#)

[Potentilla](#)

Spirea

Autumn

[Butterfly bush](#)

Rose-of-Sharon

[Witch hazel](#)