

Pruning Woody Vines

cling to these tips

I'll cover the most popular of the hardy woody vines. Some vines are aggressive, some are not, and some others have gotten a bum rap. I'll not get into the politics of this. What's invasive in one locale isn't necessarily in another. You make the call.

Campsis (Trumpet)

These can take years of landscape establishment before they begin blooming. Once they reach that stage they can be of a size that needs checking. Flower buds are not obvious like on many other plants, so cutting off tips risks removing future flowers. The best way to control size while allowing bloom is to annually remove the longest runners. Good wintertime project.

Celastrus scandens (American Bittersweet)

These bloom on new wood. Prune them to size in winter.

Clematis - spring / summer type

The most typical and popular of the Clematis are the new wood bloomers. These can be cut back by half to three-quarters each winter. That said, this is a tough group to nail in short order because of the many types. Some bloom only on old wood, some on new, and some on both. You may want to consult one of the extensive texts available that discuss Clematis pruning on variety-by-variety basis.

Clematis - fall type

The Sweet Autumn Clematis blooms on new wood. Cut to control size in winter then leave them be.

Gelsemium (Jasmine)

New hardier forms of this lovely vine are finally available. Jasmines bloom on old wood so prune shortly after flowering then let them be.

Hedera (Ivy)

The ivy family has some sweet slow growers that deserve a place in American landscapes. They can be cut back as desired any month.

Hydrangea petiolaris and Schizophragma (Climbing Hydrangeas)

They bloom on old wood with wide, flat, lacecap type flowers. While pruning will eliminate flowering, mature plants are many-stemmed, so some shape-correction or runner-control won't wipe out all your blooms. Pruning is best done in winter.

Lonicera (Honeysuckle)

Honeysuckles can bloom from both old and new wood, so pruning just about any time is fine. Once established, they will rejuvenate from being cut back or thinned out very hard every three years.

Parthenocissus tricuspidata (Boston Ivy)

These only need pruning to control or direct growth. Do this any time of year.

Polygonum aubertii (Fleece Vine)

A natural for covering wire fences. It blooms on new wood. Prune back as hard as ½ in winter.

Rosa (Climbing Rose)

These aren't really "climbers": they're varieties that grow lengthy, long lived canes that can be attached to structures. In winter, thin them out by removing some of the longest canes, then remove some of the side branches of the others. Allow some horizontal stemming to remain, as these seem to produce more blooms than vertical stems.

Vitis (Grape)

Grapes bloom on new wood. Trim them to desired shape in late winter.

Wisteria

While most bloom from old wood, some new cultivars like 'Amethyst Falls' bloom from both old and new wood. Old wood bloomers should be cut back and thinned out after flowering. Multi-season bloomers should only be thinned out in winter.