

## Pinching

To avoid staking and to produce more compact plants with stronger stems, pinch back perennials such as chrysanthemums and asters several times before mid-July. Generally the first pinching is done as soon as there are several sets of leaves on each stem. This pinching delays flowering. Pinching back only some of the stems extends the blooming season, since pinched portions will bloom later. To stagger plant heights or bloom times, perennials such as tall phlox and Autumn Joy sedum can be pruned once or twice in the summer until mid-July before the bloom in the fall. Perennials with one leafy stalk, such as a lily, and those with leafless flowering stalks, such as iris, should not be pinched back before bloom.

## Ornamental Grasses

Grasses that die back in the winter should be cut to the ground in early spring before new growth begins. Dead or diseased foliage on evergreen grasses should be similarly removed. When clumps of grasses become large, cutting them back can be difficult. If two strips of duct tape or string are wrapped around the clump, one at ground level and another a few of inches above it, a chain saw or reciprocating saw can be used to cut the stalks between the strips of tape.

## General Guidelines for Specific Plants

The following is a listing of common plants and generalized guidelines for their pruning. When in doubt, do not prune; otherwise use the suggestions below.

Table 24-A. General pruning guidelines for specific plants

Plant name	Symbol	Comments
<i>Abelia, Abelia grandiflora</i>	bsg, x, tc	Cut oldest stems to ground each year. Long shoots can be headed back during the growing season.
<i>Andromeda, Pieris</i>	af, x	Routine pruning is not required.
<i>Aralia, Acanthopanax</i>	bsg	Routine pruning is not required.
<i>Arbutus, Thuja</i>	bsg	Do not cut into old wood that has no leaves or needles.
<i>Ash, Mountain, Sorbus</i>	af	For <i>S. aria</i> prune previous year's growth by two thirds in spring. For others routine pruning is not required.
<i>Aucuba, Aucuba</i>	bsg, x	Routine pruning is not required.
<i>Azalea, Rhododendron</i>	af, x	Routine pruning is not required. Renovation pruning is done in early spring. Cut overlong branches to bud within the bush to hide the cut.
<i>Baccharis, Berberis thunbergii</i>	af, bsg, x, tc	Remove old stems to ground each spring. (This plant is listed as a "Plant Invader of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas" by the US Fish & Wildlife Service.)
<i>Bayberry, Myrica gale</i>	bsg, x	When overgrown, cut stems back to the ground.
<i>Beautyberry, Callicarpa</i>	bsg, x	Remove oldest stems to the ground each spring.
<i>Beautybush, Kolkwitzia amabilis</i>	af, tc	Cut oldest and weak stems to the ground each spring.

af after flowering  
bsg before spring growth  
x generally can be cut to ground in spring when dormant, if needed for drastic renewal of old or overgrown plants  
tc heading cut (see Fig. 24-C).  
te thinning cut (see Fig. 24-D).