

Deadheading Flowers and Cutting Back Plants

Plants have a primary goal: to flower, set seeds and die (or die back in the case of perennials). Deadheading, removing spent or expiring blooms from flowering plants, will encourage more blooms all season long. For full season aesthetic enjoyment and to continue attracting beneficial insects we want to discourage flowers from setting seed. Deadheading the blossoms will redirect the plants energy from making seed to creating more blooms. You don't have to wait for the blooms to expire though, cutting perfect blooms for bouquets also encourages more late summer or autumn blossoms, so cut away!

Removing dead or dying material from all plants will discourage disease and allow more parts of your plant to receive sunlight. Below are some descriptions of how to dead-head different types of flowers.

- The dying flowers of short-stem summer annual bedding plants such as calendula, verbena, salvia, marigolds, and petunias can be simply pinched off between finger and thumb, just below the base of the flower or just above the next set of leaves (leaf bract). Alternatively, use scissors or florists' snips.
- Tall-stem annual bedding plants, such as cosmos, zinnias, and bachelor buttons can be simply snipped off with sharp scissors just above the next set of leaves beneath the spent blossom. New buds will likely form to either side above those leaf nodes.
- Creeping perennial plants which produce masses of flowers like creeping lavender, thyme, and ground phlox, can be given a 'haircut' with hedge clippers or scissors as soon as the flowers lose their color. This will encourage fresh new green growth and possibly a second round of blooms if you get to them early enough.
- Mounded perennial plants like Lady's mantle, geraniums, gaillardia, coral bells and columbine, will give a second round of fresh greenery and possible even blossoms if you cut them back to a few inches above the ground just before they start fading and die back on their own. You may even see the new growth at the base of the plant, if so cut to there.
- The tall flower spikes of some perennials, such as lupine, delphinium, foxglove and baptisia, are best cut back before the last few flowers are finished, as seed pods are already forming at the base where the first blooms began. Prune out the flower stalk to just above the last leaf bract. If you to get them early enough in the season some tall perennials like delphiniums can be cut right to the ground and will produce a second round of blooms in late fall.



For a cleaner cut prune with clippers



Pruning with Fingers

