Pruning of Select Native Plants

Courtesy of Jane Gulley, Arkansas Master Gardener

Pruning rules of thumb:

<u>Shrubs</u> If they bloom once in spring, prune after blooming. Otherwise prune late February or early March. That generally means they bloom on new wood. If they bloom on new wood you can give periodic haircuts for wild branches and it won't hurt the bush or blooms for next year.

<u>Wildflowers</u> Real early spring bloomers leave alone. Many of them are ephemerals and will be gone shortly. For those that are early but not ephemeral, you can cut back the foliage when they look ratty, e.g. Columbine, Amsonia, and Penstemon. If the plant blooms mid-summer you can cut it by half early; when it is 6 inches cut to 3 or 4 inches. If the plant blooms late summer you can give it the early cut PLUS a second cut mid-summer; this might delay flowering a week or so, and some blooms might be a little smaller, but it won't flop and will be sturdier. The second cut should be about a third, not more than half.

Keep records of what you do! Write it down and take a picture so you can review and revise each year. If something doesn't work, don't it again.

1. Alexanders, Heart–leaved (*Zizia aperta*) – trim stems to basal clump after flowering. Remove unwanted seedlings when small.
2. Alexanders, Golden (*Zizia aurea*) – same as above
3. Amsonia, Arkansas (*Amsonia hubrichtii*) – shear to half, or more, in spring after flowering; sap causes burns on skin
4. Amsonia, Ozark (*Amsonia illustris*) **–** same as above
5. Aster, Fragrant (*Aster oblongifolius*) **–** cut back hard in late spring, crown rot and aster wilt can be problem; destroy diseased plants; divide every couple of years
6. Aster, Stokes (*Stokesia laevis*) – deadhead and remove spent flower stalks for continued bloom
7. Azalea, Mountain (*Rhododendron prinophyllum*) – prune after flowering if needed
8. Azalea, White (*Rhododendron viscosum*) – prune after flowering to maintain size and shape; will form thicket
9. Baptisia, Yellow (*Baptisia sphaerocarpa*) **–** cut back by half, or more, after flowering to keep from flopping open; cut to ground after killing frost
10. Barbara's Buttons (*Marshallia caespitosa*) – cut off bloom stems down to basal foliage
11. Beautyberry, American (*Callicarpa americana*) – Blooms on new wood; cut to 6-12" in Feb
12. Beautyberry, White (*Callicarpa dichotoma*) – same as above
13. Beebalm, Bradbury's (*Monarda bradburiana*) – cut by half early spring
14. Bergamot, Wild (*Monarda fistulosa*) – see above; can cut again early summer; can deadhead for more blooms
15. Blanket Flower (*Gaillardia* species) – dead head regularly, in late fall cut to two inches above ground
16. Blazingstar, Rough (*Liatris aspera*) – cut back by half when 1.5 feet tall. Cut by half again when 2.5 feet.

17. Blazingstar, Prairie (*Liatris pycnostachya*) – see above
18. Blazingstar, Dense (*Liatris spicata*) – cut flower stems to basal foliage when 70% bloom done and it will rebloom.
19. Boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*) – cut to ground after flowering; deadhead to get rid of seeds; very aggressive
20. Buckeye, Red (*Aesculus pavia*) – prune hard every few years to control height and make bushier
21. Bush's Poppy Mallow (*Callirhoe bushii*) – cut by half in early spring to prevent flopping; deadhead; cut to basal clump after flowering
22. Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) – prune hard every few years; can cut to ground every 4th year
23. Cardinal Flower, Red (*Lobelia cardinalis*) – leave spikes to try to reseed or cut just above leaves to get to rebloom; leave stalks in place for winter
24. Cardinal Flower, Blue (*Lobelia siphilitica*) – see above
25. Columbine, Eastern Red (*Aquilegia canadensis*) – deadhead; cut to ground after flowering
26. Compass Plant (*Silphium laciniatum*) – can trim at 1-2 feet to make shorter; if foliage turns ugly after bloom, cut to ground
27. Coneflower, Pale Purple (*Echinacea pallida*) – see below
28. Coneflower, Purple (*Echinacea purpurea*) – cut by half at end of spring, or shear by half early summer, or shear by a third in midsummer – combination gives longer bloom times; deadhead to prevent seeding; MUST remove top growth after first frost or have disease problems
29. Coneflower, Giant (*Rudbeckia maxima*) – deadhead for healthy leaves
30. Coneflower, Green–headed (*Rudbeckia lacitina*) – see below
31. Coneflower, Missouri (*Rudbeckia missouriensis*) – cut back by half in early summer; deadhead continually; cut low for winter,; watch for pests and disease–crown rot, powdery mildew, rust and leaf spots; cut back infected plants
32. Coneflower, Sweet (*Rudbeckia subtomentosa*) – see above
33. Coneflower, Rough (*Rudbeckia grandiflora*) – cut to ground after flowering to avoid flopping; see Purple Coneflower for spring trim schedule
34. Coreopsis species – dead head continually! Cut foliage low when ratty
35. Dogwood, Rough (*Cornus drummondii*) – remove suckers where not wanted
36. Dutchman's Pipe (*Aristolochia macrophyll*) – can cut to ground in early spring if too large
37. Fern, Christmas (*Polystichum acrostichoides*) – remove spent leaves each spring
38. Fire Pink (*Silene virginica*) – short lived; hope for seedlings; cut foliage to ground after bloom
39. Fragrant Sumac *(Rhus aromatica)* – cut to ground every few tears after flowering
40. Geranium, Wild (*Geranium maculatum*) – trim after bloom; cut real low if leaves yellow in summer
41. Goldenrod, Tall (*Solidago altissima*) – cut by half in early summer; deadhead for more bloom; cut to ground after bloom and when leaves look bad
42. Goldenrod, Early (*Solidago juncea*) – see above
43. Goldenrod, Rough *(Solidago patula)* – see above
44. Goldenrod, Clumping (*Solidago rigida*) – see above
45. Goldenrod, Elm–leaved (*Solidago ulmifolia*) – see above
46. Holly, Yaupon (*Ilex vomitoria*) – trim as needed

47. Honeysuckle, Trumpet *(Lonicera sempervirens)* – trim after spring bloom; prune hard every few years
48. Hydrangea – cut to 1 foot in early spring; blooms on new wood
49. Indian Pink *(Spigelia marilandica)* – cut by half after bloom and will bloom again; cut by half after bloom and will get a few third blooms
50. Iris Copper *(Iris fulva)* – can cut to ground in early spring to remove spent leaves before new growth starts
51. Ironweed, Arkansas *(Veronia arkansana)* – cut by half in late spring, cut again by half early summer; be sure to deadhead seedlings; difficult to remove
52. Ironweed, Letterman's *(Veronia lettermanii)* – worry about mildew; cut low after bloom so air can get in plant and help with mildew problem
53. Joe–Pye Weed, Sweet *(Eupatorium purpureum)* – if not getting enough water it will turn black; cut to ground and water; cut by half early summer or by third in midsummer
54. Joe–Pye Weed, Giant *(Eupatorium fistulosum)* – see above
55. Leadplant, Prairie *(Amorpha canescens)* – cut after bloom; prune hard every few years
56. Mexican Hat *(Ratibida columnifera)* – cut very low after flowering and will flower again; cut to ground after frost
57. Milkweed, Swamp *(Asclepias incarnata)* – cut by half in early spring; cut or deadhead after first flowering to get rebloom and new leaves; cut to ground late in season when aphids invade
58. Milkweed, Purple *(Asclepias purpurascens)* – see above
59. Milkweed, Prairie *(Asclepias sullivantii)* – see above
60. Milkweed, Orange, aka Butterflyweed *(Asclepias tuberosa)* – see above
61. Milkweed, Redring *(Asclepias variegata)* – see above
62. Milkweed, Green *(Asclepias virdis)* – see above
63. Mistflower, False *(Conoclinium coelestinum)* – cut by half in early spring; cut by half in late spring or early summer
64. Mountain Mint, Short–toothed *(Pycnanthemum muticum)* – cut by half in early spring; cut again in early summer
65. Mountain Mint *(Pycnanthemum tenuifolium)* – see above
66. New Jersey Tea *(Ceanothus americanus)* – can trim after blooming
67. Ninebark *(Physocarpus opulifolius)* – cut to ground every few years to maintain size, shape, and make a full, rejuvenated bush
68. Obedient plant *(Physotegi virginiana)* – cut by half in spring; cut to basal growth after flowering
69. Penstemon, Purple *(Penstemon cobaea)* – remove spent flowers to keep plant vigorous
70. Penstemon, White *(Penstemon digitalis)* – cut to basal growth as flower stems decline; deadhead
71. Petunia, Stalked *(Ruellia pedunculata)* – can spread and seed all over; remove unwanted plants - good luck!
72. Phlox, Smooth/Marsh *(Phlox gaberrima)* – cut by half in spring; deadhead and cut again after flowering; cut to ground and throw away trimmings before winter to help control disease; divide every three years, and throw away center of plant
73. Phlox, Downy *(Phlox pilosa)* – see above
74. Prairie Sundrops *(Oenothera pilosella)* – deadhead and cut to basal leaves after bloom period

75. Prairie-Clover, Purple (*Dalea purpurea*) – huge taproot; can trim as often as needed to shape plant
76. Pussytoes (*Antennaria plantaginifolia*) – protect from other plants
77. Ragwort, Golden (*Packera aurea*) – remove from around Cardinal Flowers and other plants
78. Ragwort, Round–leafed (*Packera obovata*) – **get rid of it**; watch closely to make certain it does not return
79. Rattlesnake Master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*) – remove flower heads when they turn yellow; remove babies when want to control size
80. River Oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*) – mow stalks in Feb to tidy
81. Rosinweed, Starry (*Silphium asteriscus*) – cut by half in early spring; after blooming cut to ground when looks bad; deadhead to control seeds
82. Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) – does best in groups, in shade; cut way back every few years if plants need rejuvenation
83. Spiderwort, Hairy (*Tradescantia hirsuticaulis*) – cut by half in early spring; cut back to ground after flowering or if plants look bad
84. Spiderwort, Wild (*Tradescantia longipes*) – cut to ground after flowering
85. Spiderwort, Ohio (*Tradescantia ohiensis*) – cut by half in early spring; cut to ground after flowering or if plants look bad
86. St. John's Wort, Shrubby (*Hypericum prolificum*) – Prune in early spring; blooms on new wood; trim back after blooming to maintain shape
87. Steeplebush (*Spiraea tomentosa*) – cut back in February; blooms on new wood, so that encourages bloom; deadhead continually for continuing bloom; will sucker but slowly
88. Strawberry Bush (*Euonymus americanus*) – watch for scale; more shade equals more chance for scale; cut low before bloom, or every few years cut to ground to rejuvenate
89. Sunflower, Maximilian (*Helianthus maximilianii*) – cut by half in early summer, again by a third in mid-summer; cut back after bloom to control self-seeding
90. Sunflower, Narrow–leaved (*Helianthus angustifolius*) – see above
91. Sunflower, Ashy (*Helianthus mollis*) – see above
92. Sweetspire, Virginia *(Itea viriginica*) – cut low every few years; dig out unwanted suckers
93. Turk's cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus*) – cut by half in late spring; trim anytime to control spread
94. Verbena, Rose (*Glandularia canadensis*) – deadhead constantly; cut back hard in mid-summer after bloom; do not cut hard before fall as growth helps them overwinter
95. Violet, Prairie (*Viola pedatifida*) – do not let other plants encroach
96. Violet, Wood (*Viola sororia*) – NO! **Remove when seen!**
97. Violet, Bird's Foot (*Viola pedata*) – do not let other plants encroach
98. Violet, Walter's (*Viola walteri*) – do not let other plants encroach
99. Wax Myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*) – trim as needed
100. Yucca, Arkansas (*Yucca arkansana*) – remove flowering stem and its rosette so that rosette won't bloom again