



Welcome to my weekly series!
ASK THE LANDSCAPE PROFESSIONAL

Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs

SPRIGS & TWIGS HAS BEEN DESIGNATED AN ESSENTIAL BUSINESS AND WE ARE OPEN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH CT GOVERNOR NED LAMONT'S EXECUTIVE ORDER 7H, DATED MARCH 20, 2020.

I have a beautiful holly bush that I absolutely love. Unfortunately, it has gotten away from me and grown to be ungainly and way too large. How can I prune it down to a more reasonable size and shape without putting it into shock or killing it? Allison



Hi Allison,

You can safely prune your holly by 1/3 without shocking it, in other words, you can reduce the height by 1/3 and the width by 1/3 each year. You must use sharp hand pruners and loppers. Do not prune with electric hedge trimmers! Keep in mind that wherever you make a pruning cut is the spot where new growth will be stimulated, so you'll want to make some cuts at various spots inside the shrub. One of the reasons I don't like electric hedge trimmers is the new growth will be stimulated on the outside of the shrub which will make it thick and tangled which invites insects and disease. The other reason to avoid electric hedge trimmers is that they are often not kept sharp and end up tearing the plant and not cutting properly.

Start pruning from the inside of your holly and make sure you prune out any crossing branches (there will be many). This will help improve air circulation within the shrub which is important. Remove any thin, hanging and dead branches. When you are finished, all of the branches should be coming out straight from the main stem out to the branch tips. Raise the bottom branches up off the ground by 6-8" to allow for air circulation within the plant. Do not be afraid to prune, this plant will grow back very well. By the time you are finished, it should not look like the holly you started out with. You should be able to see through it. If you can't see through it, prune some more. The best time to do this type of pruning is between May and August so new growth will fill in the plant. Once you do the pruning I described, it will be easy to do touch up pruning at least once/year. Good Luck.

EMAIL OR MAIL YOUR QUESTIONS TO:
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