

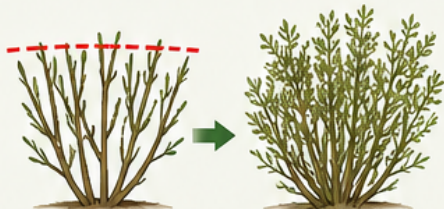
# How to Regenerate an Overgrown Shrub Border Without Creating a "Crew Cut"

Over time, shrubs become too tall, too dense and difficult to manage. Cutting all the tops off may seem the quickest solution, but it creates a "crew cut" effect that leads to thicker, twiggy growth and even more work.



## ✗ AVOID THE "HAIRCUT" APPROACH

✗ Cutting every stem at the same height creates a "crew cut".

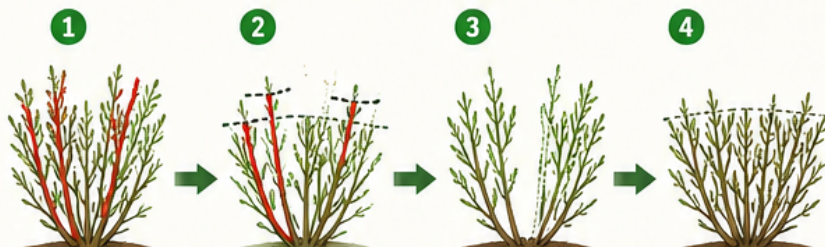


Each cut stimulates several new shoots just below the cut.

Results in a dense mass of twiggy growth at the top, blocking light and requiring frequent trimming.

## ✓ A BETTER WAY TO REDUCE HEIGHT

Work with the natural structure of the shrub.



Select individual main stems throughout the shrub.

Reduce these structural stems by around one-third.

Remove approx. one in every three or four stems completely to open up the centre.

Lightly trim any remaining shoots that still exceed the desired height by around 20%.

## THE ONE-THIRD RULE

Avoid removing more than one-third of the shrub in a single season. Cutting back more aggressively usually stimulates vigorous new growth.



### ✓ UP TO 1/3 REMOVED

Encourages healthy new growth and natural rebalance.

### ⚠ TOO MUCH REMOVED

Risk of vigorous, long soft shoots replacing lost growth.

### ✗ SPREAD OVER YEARS

For very overgrown shrubs, renovate over 2-3 years rather than all at once.

## FEED AFTER PRUNING

After pruning, feed to encourage healthy recovery.



During the growing season, use a balanced fertiliser such as Miracle-Gro to stimulate healthy leaf growth.



Later in the season, switch to a high-potash feed such as liquid tomato fertiliser to strengthen new growth before winter.



Apply organic matter such as compost or well-rotted manure around the base to improve soil health and moisture retention.



## SHRUBS THAT RESPOND WELL

These shrubs generally produce vigorous new growth after careful renovation pruning.



Prunus (Cherry Laurel & related species)



Photinia



Aucuba



Weigela



Forsythia



Viburnum



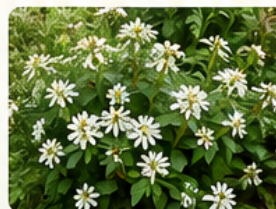
Escallonia



Cotoneaster

## SHRUBS THAT NEED MORE CARE

Not every shrub tolerates heavy cutting back. Plants such as *Choisya ternata* and some slower-growing evergreens can react poorly and need more specialist care.



*Choisya ternata*

If you are unsure whether a shrub is suitable for renovation pruning, identify the plant before starting.

## 📷 NEED HELP IDENTIFYING YOUR SHRUBS?

If you're uncertain which shrubs you have or how much they can safely be reduced, simply send a photograph to your GardenAdvice advisor or use Helene AI to identify the plant and receive guidance.

A quick identification can help you decide whether the shrub can be safely reduced by up to one-third or whether it requires a different pruning method.



With careful selective pruning, most shrub borders can be rejuvenated, kept at a manageable height and continue providing an attractive screen for many years – without the harsh appearance created by repeated topping.