

IT HAD TO BE YEW

and other shrubs that meet your needs

They lighten the landscape and provide structure to your garden. They come in a variety of sizes, shapes and colors, textures and fragrances. They can serve as hedges, screens or the backbone of a foundation planting. They're shrubs, and with all they're capable of, the name should be longer—or at least more audibly pleasing. In any case, here are the basic facts about choosing and caring for a nursery stock investment.

Determine its use before selecting the your shrub. Keep in mind that most shrubs grow quickly, so expect that they'll create an immediate effect. In a new landscape, choose a larger shrub, especially around focal points, such as the entrance to your home. Choose smaller shrubs around foundation plantings, or use taller ones in numbers to help screen out the beer-swilling hillbillies next door. Most shrubs will reach maturity in three to five years, although you're neighbors probably never will.

- If you're looking specifically for early spring color, as you likely are this time of year, the most popular choices are lilac, forsythia, pyracantha, mock orange, chokeberry, deutzia, beautybush, azaleas and rhododendrons, viburnum, flowering almond, weigela, winter daphne, spirea and some hydrangeas.
- Hydrangeas are particularly trendy now, and they're essentially a class unto themselves. (With all shrubs, ask whether their buds are formed on new wood, old wood or both.) For color the following year, find out which hydrangeas bloom on old wood; examples include: *Hydrangea macrophylla*, which encompass Hortensias and Lacecaps and *Hortensias quercifolia*. On new wood: *Hortensias paniculata* and *Horensias arborescens*.



The azalea, a popular spring-flowering shrub, is a colorful, compact and spreading plant with tiny contrasting leaves.

Select the nursery stock yourself, even if you have a landscape crew installing it.

- Choose a shrub that is free of wounds and pest damage. If needed, peel back any wrapping to inspect for cuts or damage. Branches should be well placed, but those shrubs needing severe pruning should be left behind.
- Gently move the base of the shrub back and forth to determine if the roots are well connected.
- Branches and/or blooms should be of good color, have no pests and be of a decent size.
- Shrubs should have a dense root system, but not be root bound.

Plant your shrub in early spring, as soon as the ground thaws and is dry enough to be workable.

- Because most soils could be improved upon, add amendments, such as compost or peat moss, throughout the bed,



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Hydrangea—the clearly colorful favorite as of late.

working a 3-in. layer into the top 8 in. of the soil. As a general guideline, dig a hole that is the depth of the rootball, but twice its width; the top of the rootball should be level with the soil surface.

Pruning the shrub is a typical responsibility. For example, azaleas and rhododendrons will tolerate pruning but, generally, pruning is required only to remove dead or unruly branches.

- Look for diseased or dead branches and remove these at the base of the injury. This will allow you to see more clearly the shape of the shrub and determine the number of

Function Follows Form

Beyond spring-flowering shrubs, look at function to meet your needs, courtesy of Bayer Advanced:

Evergreens for edging or low hedges:

- Box-leafed euonymus
- Dwarf Japanese yew
- English boxwood
- Everlow yew
- Harland boxwood
- Korean boxwood
- Rotunda holly

Low evergreens that won't hide windows in a foundation planting:

- Carissa holly
- Crimson Pygmy barberry
- Dwarf junipers
- Dwarf nandina
- Dwarf wax myrtle
- Dwarf yaupon
- Gumpo azalea
- Helli holly
- Stokes holly
- Otto Luyken laurel
- Rotunda holly
- Spreading English yew
- Wardii yew

Evergreens for large clipped hedges and privacy screens:

- Abelia
- American boxwood
- Arborvitae
- English boxwood
- English yew
- Inkberry holly
- Japanese holly
- Littleleaf boxwood
- Wintergreen barberry



healthy branches that you can remove and still maintain its integrity.

- In general, plants produce more flowers on young, vigorous shoots. On multi-stem shrubs, remove 1/4 of the oldest branches at ground level. Not only will this provide more energy (and blooms) on the younger shoots, it will encourage more young shoots to develop.
- Time your pruning to occur no later than six to eight weeks after bloom, which will allow you to shape the plant and control the size, and the plant will have time to produce more vigorous stems on which to form flower buds next year.

Typical maintenance includes watering, fertilizing and mulching.

- Remember to water your shrub the day you plant it, which ensures a healthy, moist rootball. After that, water regularly during the first year to make sure the roots are established well and that they'll grow to their potential.
- Shrubs with thin and fibrous roots will dry out quickly, performing poorly in drought conditions. Azaleas are particularly prone to such stress.
- Fertilize at the beginning of the growing season, especially during the first three- to five-year period when the shrub is maturing. Timed-release products that feed gradually for three, six or nine months are suggested, as well.
- As with numerous plantings, mulching reduces weeds, conserves moisture and provides insulation for your shrubs. But avoid piling mulch next to the base. 🍃

—By Marisa Shoemaker, with special thanks to *Grounds Maintenance magazine* and Bayer Advanced.