Pruning Viburnum Shrubs

Pruning a viburnum can be done at any time of the year and as different viburnum plants can bloom all throughout the year it is best to do any formal pruning once the plant has stopped flowering. Plants that bloom in the spring should be pruned in late summer and so forth.

Pinching out new young shoots helps to keep the plant under control without having to subject it to a formal pruning. Just pinch the green tip and it will result in a more woody stem with more side branches.

Thinning out various selected stems gives the plant a more open and airy appearance. Cut out some older branches this way. Cut the branch right back to the main stem ending with a "Y" shape.

Pruning for rejuvenation is to be taken seriously and viburnum plants benefit from this type of pruning every few years. Cut the entire plant back to near the ground leaving good sturdy new stems in place. New thin stems should be removed altogether.

If frost is likely to be a problem delay pruning as once the plant is pruned it my send out new shoots too quickly which will most likely be killed by the frost.

Pinching Back

The only tools you need are two fingers, hence the name. The action is somewhat akin to deadheading, but pinching back achieves a separate purpose. The main reason for pinching back is to keep a plant compact and prevent it from getting too tall or "leggy." Terminal growth at the tips of the branches is reduced and the plants energy is refocused on lateral growth, which means a bushier plant with more flowers.

The role of 'pinching' as opposed to 'pruning'. Pruning is used (with reference to branches) to shape the branch, change the direction of the branch, and create taper within the branch. This is all done by pruning back to a bud aimed in the direction that you want it to go. This is usually done to a shoot with several internodes to be removed. It doesn't matter if you use your fingers, or garden scissors/pruners, as long as you do a neat job. This is done by removing the tip of the growing branch, usually removing two nodes of a three node shoot (a node is where buds appear or leaves grow). This does two things: 1) it shortens the branch. 2) it releases the buds behind it, interrupting apical dominance.

The result is that by pinching out the terminal bud, or removing a two or three bud shoot, several of the buds remaining on this stem are free to open. Usually one or two will open before the new terminal bud starts forming the hormone and stops the process. Thus, where you once had a soft straight shoot with ***increasing*** internodes (usually), you now have two buds opening forming a forked branch with shorter internodes and achieving ramification.