

Abbottsford Shrub Update & Expert Recommendations

Notice: The following is a summary of advice from experts. The Abbottsford HOA is providing this information as a courtesy but is not making specific recommendations. You must decide what, if any, actions you want to take to maintain your own private property and select your own experts. Sunrise of Nashville provides hedge-trimming/shearing/shaping of shrubs 2-5 times per year. Hand pruning will cost extra. Ashley will work to provide additional details about common shrub species & how to care for them. That information will be posted on the "Landscape Education" section of Abbottsford's website.

Boxwoods Pruning Demonstration

Date: Saturday, April 22nd at 4pm

Location: Bellows Residence at 132 Abbottsford

Bobby Calloway will demonstrate her boxwood pruning technique for any neighbors interested in learning how to prune their own boxwoods. Boxwood pruning isn't difficult, but it is time consuming. Boxwood experts are exceptionally busy this year; Many are not taking on extra work.

Boxwood Pruning Experts:

1. Bobby Calloway (615) 474-2817: Owner of Calloway Boxwood Nursery & Landscaping.
2. Gale Higgs is an active member of the TNLA, TN Landscape & Nursery Association. Gale has extensive experience pruning boxwoods. Established boxwoods can be cut back almost in half. Gale says the root system is extensive enough to recover from a more drastic cutback but wait until about mid-May to do so. He shares the advice of boxwood experts summarized below.
3. Brad Spain has extensive experience with boxwoods and grows thousands of boxwoods of many different species & varieties. He contributes advice but is too busy attending to his existing clients to take on any new business this year.

Bobby Calloway's Advice for Boxwood Health

- Boxwoods should reach no more than 3' to 4' tall & wide for optimal health and beauty.
- Overgrown boxwoods can be reduced in size gradually (Bobby's preference) or more dramatically (Gale Higgs' preference for established boxwoods).
- To gradually reduce the size of your boxwoods, remove 2 out of every 5 small branches that are less than ¼" in diameter each year until the desired size is reached.
- Use sharp and clean pruning tools. Clean your pruners with a 10% bleach solution before moving to the next shrub to prevent transmission of disease and fungus between shrubs.
- Branches with splits running along the length of the stem are dead and should be removed.
- Don't fertilize Boxwoods until mid-May. They are stressed enough as it is and don't need the extra workload. If you want to feed them, use Monty's Plant Food 3-3-3.
- Dead leaves can be removed now with an air blower, or you can just let them fall off naturally.
- If you want to wait to see if your boxwoods can recover on their own, you will know by fall.
- Remove dead branches from the interior of the boxwood once every 3-4 years.

- Prune boxwoods with hand pruning tools once a year in mid-late spring after the leaves harden off. Hardening off is complete once young, light green, spring leaves thicken, harden, and darken in color. Do not prune after midsummer; leaves may not be mature enough to survive winter winds and cold temperatures.
- Never prune boxwoods with hedge trimmers. Hedge-trimming forces dense growth on the exterior only, preventing light & air from reaching the interior. Lack of air flow & light to the interior increases susceptibility to disease, insect infestations, snow & ice load damage. Hand pruning is required for lush, full, and healthy boxwoods.
- Water deeply during droughts & before hard freezes, as long as temps are above 40 degrees.
- Boxwood blight kills all boxwoods. So far, Abbotsford has no boxwood blight. The closest impacted area that Bobby knows of is on Tyne Blvd.
- Plant boxwoods during winter dormancy, never in summer.
- Leaf Miner Treatment: Spray small mosquito-like leaf miners with a dishwashing liquid & water solution as soon as you see them flying around your boxwoods.

Brad Spain's Advice for Boxwoods

- Apply Organic Fertilizer (SUPERthrive 0.5-0-0 or Monty's Plant Vantage 2-15-15) to any shrub.
- When to Prune: Wait until mid-May for more leaves to appear and harden off.
- How to Prune: First, remove lifeless branches at the base. Second, cut back long, unattractive branches minimally, so they retain the maximum amount of photosynthetic capacity. Exception: Intense sun exposure may damage some newly exposed branches on boxwoods in full sun. Consider leaving some dead material on the top of full sun boxwoods until fall. Boxwoods in shade to part sun will have little to no sun scorching of branches. Open holes in the tops of more shady boxwoods to encourage leaf growth in the shrub's interior. The flash freeze already reduced even healthy boxwoods by 30-40%, so don't reduce too much this year.
- Plant Recommendations: 'Green Mountain' & 'Varder Valley' hybrid boxwoods are more resistant to leaf miners and spider mites than other boxwoods. 'Green Velvet' fared well overall through the flash freeze. Well maintained boxwoods survived the flash freeze with minimal damage.
- Leaf Miner Treatment: Imidicloprid systemic treatment kills leaf miners & lasts a year.

Cherry Laurels (*Prunus laurocerasus*)

Abbotsford has two, common varieties of cherry laurels: 'Schip' laurels and 'Otto Luyken.'

'Otto Luyken' is a low growing, dwarf variety of cherry laurel that grows 3' - 4' tall and about twice as wide. They are leafing out very well & should fully recover without significant pruning needs.

'Schip' or 'Skip' Laurels are common evergreen screening shrubs around electrical boxes and foundations. New growth is starting to appear from the roots and lower branches. Schip laurels on HOA property will be cut back to 24" from the ground in the next few weeks. Bates Nursery Landscape Specialists, Joy Boven & Austin Lohin, Dwight Beard, Brad Spain, UT Extension Agents, Master Gardeners, and several other horticulturalists have agreed on the following advice:

- Schip laurels can be pruned & should regrow from their strong, well-established root systems.

- If new growth does not appear by the end of June, the shrub is dead and will need to be removed and replaced. Wait to replant until after the intense heat of summer has passed, unless you can water shrubs while they establish.
- Schip laurels grow 2'-3' per year and respond very well to pruning.
- Nurseries are currently stocked with replacement options, although some have doubled or tripled their prices. Prices should normalize in Fall. Request several replacement options.
- Sunrise of Nashville recommends the following replacements laurels: 'Greenfinity' maxes out at 5' tall; 'Castlewall' Blue Holly; Dwarf Varieties that max out at 3'-4' tall are 'Otto Luyken,' 'Chestnut Hill,' and 'Jade Enchantress.' The latter two are more disease resistant varieties. Check availability, as it changes rapidly this time of year.

Hollies: Older, well-established hollies should regenerate this spring, but younger plantings may struggle to recover & require replacement. Scratch the outer bark to look for green tissue. Living tissue will bend with gentle pressure. Dead branches will snap easily. Cut back black (dead) branch tips to living green tissue. Consider replacement if no new growth appears by the end of May.

Nandinas: Old, dead, or overgrown canes should be removed. Prune in mid-winter to early spring to retain berries. Remove 1/3 of the largest, oldest canes every year for 3 years to retain fullness.

Japanese Yews: Prune overgrown & unsightly branches in early spring. Allow light and air to reach the interior of the shrub to promote growth in the interior.

Green Giant Arborvitae & Leyland Cypress: Foresters and many arborists advise not to plant these inexpensive, fast-growing screening trees any longer. The flash freeze killed almost all of them. Consult several local nurseries for alternate screening suggestions that fared better through the drought & flash freeze of 2022.

Crepe Myrtles: Call an arborist if your crepe myrtle has black, sooty mold. It could be a bark scale insect infestation. An arborist will help you determine the best course of action. Preventative treatments do exist and can be very effective when applied prior to infestation.