

TRIMMING AND DEADHEADING

Normally very little trimming is necessary, but sometimes a plant grows out over a walk or covers a window and needs to be pruned back. Pruning should be done in the spring, if possible, when the plant is blooming. All the discarded blooms can be brought in the house for bouquets. When making the cuts, clip right above a leaf whorl or cut flush with the trunk, don't leave stubs.

In extreme cases when a plant is very leggy, you can "stump" it. Once again, this should be done in the spring. Simply cut the entire plant to a 6"-8" stump and give it some fertilizer. You will probably have a bare stump with no leaves and think you have killed the plant. Most of the time it will flush out beautifully, however, we have had a few failures. Therefore, you may not want to do this with a prized plant. It will be two years before it blooms again, but meanwhile you will have a small but full plant.

After blooming, we recommend you remove the withered flowers on large leaf Rhododendrons. This process is called "deadheading." Simply snap the flowers off at the base. Be careful not to remove the new shoots. Get the whole family out for this fun event! Deadheading prevents seed production, improves the appearance of the plant, and encourages better flower bud set for the following year. The small PJM types do not need deadheading.