

SATURDAYS IN THE GARDENS

OSU Extension Service Demonstration Garden

08/23/2025

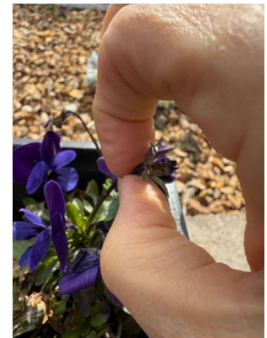
Deadheading to Promote Growth

Deadheading is a form of pruning to remove spent flowers from ornamental plants. Fading flowers are not as appealing and direct a lot of energy into seed development if pollinated. The goal of deadheading is to preserve the attractiveness of the plants in beds, borders, containers and hanging baskets, as well as to encourage further blooming. Deadheading can be done with finger and thumb or with pruning shears or scissors.

How to deadhead

With finger and thumb

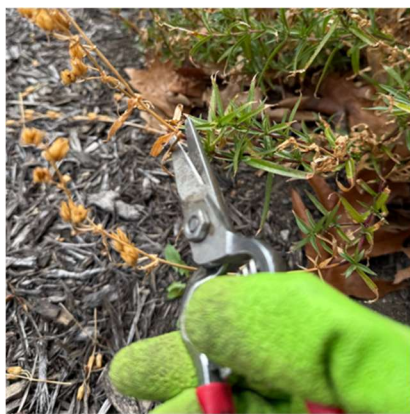
Pinch or snap off faded blooms with finger and thumb, aiming to remove the flower with its stalk to keep the plant looking tidy.



With pruning shears or scissors

To deadhead plants with thick, tough or stringy stems, use pruning shears or scissors. On most plants, trim away the spent flower, cutting back to just above the next bud or leaf on the stem.

For plants that produce heads of multiple flowers, such as delphiniums and lupins, pinch or trim off individual flowers (where practical) and then prune the entire head to just above a lower bud/leaf/side shoot, or to ground level, once all have finished.



Steps:

1. Ensure your pruning shears or scissors are sharp and clean.
2. Cut back flowers to just above next bud or leaf on the stem or to individual flower if on a plant head of multiple flowers.
3. Spray pruning shears or scissors with 70% isopropyl alcohol before moving to a different plant to avoid possibility of spreading disease between plants.



Photos: Shawna Larson

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