



Garden Maintenance : The Chelsea Chop Plant List

The Chelsea Flower Show traditionally takes place near the beginning of June and gives its name as a reminder to gardeners that it is time to cut back certain summer-blooming perennials by one third to one half: the *Chelsea Chop*.

While not strictly necessary, this type of pruning has three main goals:

- to bulk up plants to keep them from flopping over, either from the weight of the flowers or due to wind and rain;
- to create a more symmetrical, bushier form; and
- to produce more flowers over a longer period of time.

Bowood plant candidates for “chopping” are listed below. Different techniques for early summer plant maintenance are then proposed for various other Bowood plants. Some are listed more than once to provide multiple options.

Opposite Leaves = Selective Chelsea Chop

These plants are easy to recognize, simple to prune, and respond quickly with two branches for every cut! Snip just above a leaf pair, varying the heights of each stem to provide a more natural look.

<i>Agastache</i> / Anise Hyssop	<i>Kalimaris</i> / Japanese Aster	<i>Phlox pan</i> / Garden Phlox
<i>Buddleja</i> / Butterfly Bush	<i>Monarda</i> / Bee Balm	<i>Salvia</i> / Meadow Sage
<i>Caryopteris</i> / Blue Mist Shrub	<i>Nepeta</i> / Catmint	<i>Sedum</i> / Upright Stonecrop
<i>Chelone</i> / Turtlehead	<i>Origanum</i> / Flowering Oregano	<i>Teucrium</i> / Germander
<i>Eupatorium</i> / Joe Pye Weed		<i>Veronica</i> / Speedwell

Alternate Leaves = Chelsea Chop

Plants that flower late in the season can either simply be cut straight across, or pruned selectively just above a leaf. New foliage usually emerges from that point and the next leaf down the stem as well.

<i>Echinacea</i> / Coneflower	<i>Pycnanthemum</i> / Mountain Mint	<i>Solidago</i> / Goldenrod
<i>Helenium</i> / Sneezeweed	<i>Rudbeckia</i> / Black-eyed Susan	<i>Symphyotrichum</i> / Aster

Tidying Up = Deadhead After Blooming

These perennials bloom for a long time, but usually only once. They look better with prompt removal of flower stems and will respond with a flush of new foliage growth. Some (*) may also rebloom.

<i>Ajuga</i> / Bugleweed	<i>Brunnera</i> / Siberian Bugloss	<i>Phlox div</i> / Wild Sweet William
<i>Alchemilla</i> / Lady's Mantle	<i>Geranium</i> / Cranesbill *	<i>Polemonium</i> / Jacob's Ladder
<i>Aquilegia</i> / Columbine *	<i>Liatris</i> / Blazing Star	<i>Pulmonaria</i> / Lungwort
<i>Bergenia</i> / Pigsqueak	<i>Paeonia</i> / Peony	<i>Thalictrum</i> / Meadow Rue

Find the Flower Bud = Deadheading

A little trickier, these plants should be promptly deadheaded by searching down the stem for the next emerging flower bud in the notch of a lower leaf. Carefully snip the stem just above that leaf rather than just snipping off the dead flower.

Achillea / Yarrow

Dahlia / Dahlia

Delphinium / Larkspur

Dianthus / Pinks *

Digitalis / Foxglove

Echinacea / Coneflower

Leucanthemum / Shasta Daisy

Lobelia / Cardinal Flower

Ratibida / Mexican Hat

Stokesia / Stokes' Aster

Basal Foliage = Deep Deadheading

Run your snips all the way down to the bottom of each flower stem before cutting it and many plants (*) will re-bloom.

Anemone / Japanese Anemone *

Armeria / Sea Thrift *

Astilbe / Astilbe

Geum / Avens *

Hemerocallis / Daylily *

Heuchera / Coral Bells

Hosta / Hosta

Iris / Iris

Kniphofia / Red Hot Poker *

Liatris / Blazing Star

Papaver / Poppy *

Penstemon / Beardtongue

Sanguisorba / Burnet

Stachys / Betony* and Lamb's Ear

Trollius / Globe Flower

Fluffy Foliage = Shearing is Easiest

These plants have so many flowers it becomes very tedious to deadhead – they respond well to an overall haircut.

Achillea / Yarrow

Calamintha / Calamint

Coreopsis / Tickseed

Geranium / Cranesbill

Lamium / Spotted Deadnettle

Nepeta / Catmint

Interesting Seed-heads = Delay Deadheading

Feathery, wispy, or long-lived, the seed-heads of these plants add interesting texture: consider delaying any pruning.

Anemone sylv / Wild Anemone

Aruncus / Goatsbeard

Astilbe / Astilbe

Baptisia / False Indigo

Helleborus / Lenten Rose

Penstemon / Beardtongue

Pulsatilla / Pasqueflower

Growing Big = Leave Me Alone

Some plants are meant to grow either tall and stately or wide-spreading and are best left alone.

Amsonia / Blue Star

Asclepias / Milkweed

Ceratostigma / Leadwort

Gaura / Wand Flower

Hibiscus / Rose Mallow

Perovskia / Russian Sage

Polygonatum / Solomon's Seal

Rudbeckia sub / Sweet Coneflower

Silphium / Cup Plant

Tricyrtis / Toad Lily

This is not an exhaustive list but will get you started on early summer maintenance. Once you begin to recognize the different forms of perennial growth, you'll be able to analyze how to approach an unfamiliar plant. Don't be afraid to experiment: most perennials are quite tough, appreciate any attention they receive, and respond with new growth. Remember, we're always available here at Bowood and happy to answer your plant questions!