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Forsythia Bush: Plant Care and Growing Guide



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Planting, growing, caring, and pruning forsythias

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)

Last Updated: March 14, 2025



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The bright yellow blooms of forsythias are hard to miss in early spring, especially in the still-sleepy landscape recovering from winter. Happily, these cheerful flowering bushes are adaptable, fast-growing, and forgiving in any soil. Learn how to plant, grow, and care for forsythia—including tips on when to prune.

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About Forsythia



A bird perching on a bright yellow forsythia bush.

Forsythia are members of the olive family (Oleaceae). Although this shrub has become naturalized in much of Europe and North America, its ancestors hail mainly from East

As landscape plants, forsythias are suitable for planting in most of the continental United States; species and hybrid crosses are hardy from Zone 3 to Zone 8. However, blooms may be delayed in temperatures below -5° to -10° F.

Depending on the cultivar, the shrub may reach up to 10 feet in height and 12 feet in diameter, so give forsythia plenty of space unless you plan on pruning. Their yellow flowers that appear in early spring bloom on their long, arching branches. The flowers are self-sterile.

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The forsythia shrub makes a vigorous border for any yard or driveway. The flowers attract

and winter gardens as a backdrop to spring bulbs.

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PLANTING

Forsythia is impressively adaptable and even seems to thrive on neglect. The shrub will grow in most soils and in sun or partial shade. However, you'll get more flowers earlier in the spring if you plant in the sun. In addition, while this shrub will tolerate even dry, poor soils, it prefers loose, well-draining soil with a pH that ranges from about 7.0 to 8.0 (neutral to slightly alkaline).



Large forsythia bush. Credit: Andreas Rockstein

The best time to plant forsythia is in the fall, while the plant is dormant.

How to Plant Forsythia Bushes

- Dig a hole at least two times wider than the root ball.
- Make sure that the top of the root ball is at ground level.
- Pack the soil firmly around the roots.
- Water deeply at the time of planting.

GROWING

How to Care for Forsythia

Other than a yearly pruning, forsythia do not require much maintenance.

- Apply a fertilizer high in phosphorus in early spring each year.
- Softwood forsythia cuttings taken in late spring to early summer will root readily, allowing for easy propagation.

How to Prune Forsythia Bushes

Forsythia are spring-blooming shrubs that can get a little wild if you don't prune. Also, it

- Flowers bloom on old wood (last year's growth). Prune the shrub in the spring—right after flowering! If you prune mid-summer, you will remove the buds for the following season.
- Remove older branches by cutting them off at the ground.
- Some cultivars may sucker, so remove suckers to avoid spreading.
- Old, neglected forsythias can be rejuvenated by pruning them back to almost ground level! Prune within 3 to 4 inches of the ground in late winter or early spring. They'll produce new growth as temperatures warm and days lengthen.



Yellow forsythia.

How to Propagate Forsythia

It's easy to start new forsythia from softwood cuttings. You'll need a large container with drainage holes, a potting medium such as coarse sand or perlite, and a rooting medium.

1. Cut off 6-inch-long shoots in midsummer with a sterile, sharp knife.
2. Remove the leaves from the lower 3 inches of the cuttings.
3. Dip the cuttings in the rooting medium and insert the lower 2 inches into a pot filled with coarse sand or perlite.
4. Firm up, water, and let the water drain.
5. Cover the pot and cuttings with a clear plastic bag.
6. Place the container in sunlight. It should be bright but not direct light.
7. Let your cuttings develop root systems for 6 to 8 weeks.
8. Transplant into containers filled with regular potting mix. Water and let drain.

There are about 11 species of forsythia and they are primarily native to eastern Asia, with one species from Europe. *Forsythia suspensa* and *F. viridissima* were the first to be brought from Asia to Europe. *Forsythia × intermedia* is a hybrid of these species that was introduced in Europe about 1880.

There are many *Forsythia* cultivars available, some as tall as 10 feet and others (dwarf varieties) barely reaching 4 feet tall.

- ‘**Lynwood Gold**’ and ‘**Spring Glory**’ are hardy to -10°F.
- ‘**Meadowlark**’ is hardy to -30°F. The flowers are the classic bright yellow.
- ‘**Sunrise**’ is a compact hardy cultivar. The shrub is covered with small yellow flowers in early spring.
- ‘**Fiesta**’ is a compact 3-to-4-foot-tall shrub with variegated foliage. Leaves are green with yellow centers.
- ‘**Happy Centennial**’ is a low-growing cultivar developed in Canada, with light yellow flowers.

HARVESTING

To bring spring colors into your home, try forcing forsythia indoors! Simply prune off branches in late winter or early spring and set them in water. They should bloom within a week.



Forsythia blooming on a branch. Credit:
Maja Dumat

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This hardy shrub rarely experiences severe damage from pests or diseases. It is deer-tolerant and even Japanese beetle-resistant.

Occasionally, forsythia can get gall formations at their nodes. They are little round growths that happen because of an insect puncture hole that gets infected. Forsythia gall makes it harder for the shrub to transport nutrients, and it can slowly decline in flowering and health. If you see any of these little round galls, cutting off the branches at your earliest convenience is the best solution. Also, after you prune, don't forget to disinfect your tools to avoid spreading disease.

Why Isn't My Forsythia Blooming?

As mentioned above, pruning at the wrong time is a definite problem. If you didn't prune right after flowering, you cut off next year's buds and blooms. Don't prune too late!

Late flowering may occur if your shrub is planted in partial shade versus the sun. In addition, freezing temperatures in the negatives can affect blooming for many cultivars.

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WIT AND WISDOM

- One old-time saying is to plant peas when the forsythia starts to blossom,
- The genus is named for William Forsyth (1737–1804), a Scottish botanist, founding member of the Royal Horticultural Society, and head gardener of the Royal Gardens of Kensington Palace.
- In the language of flowers, the meaning of forsythia is “anticipation.”

SHRUBS AND TREES

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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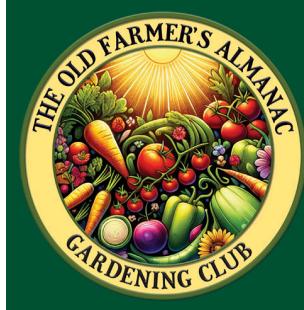
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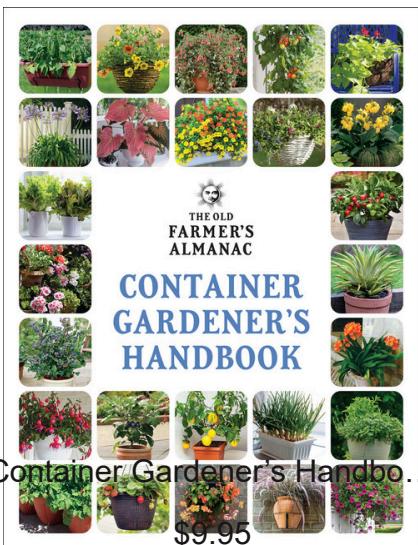
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